Kitab Mahal Series on English Literature No. 63.

DRYDEN'S ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

By
**Prof. Bashir Hussain
M.A.**

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URDU BAZAR
LAHORE (W. PAK)

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Introduction, Text, Notes & Explanations

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CHAPTER 1

DRYDEN AND HIS TIMES

Introduction.

"When we read the works of Dryden", writes David Nichol Smith, "we make a study of his Age. Most of his longer poems were inspired by political or religious controversy, and were intended to have an immediate influence on public opinion." This is a significant statement inasmuch as points out the clue to the study of Dryden. The age of Dryden is one of the most fruitful periods of English literary history. Dryden always thought of his times as a period of construction and adjustment, and habitually spoke of them as the 'New Age'. In politics its great task was the adjustment to the constitution to the new conditions.

1. The Historical Background.

There are three major historical events which have influenced the thought of the age :

The Restoration (1660). The Convention Parliament, which consisted of moderate Roundheads of the Presbyterian Party with a strong admixture of Cavaliers, called back Charles II from his exile in Holland and restored him to the throne of England in 1660. At this important crisis of the constitution, as G. M. Trevelyan has pointed out, it was not the King who summoned the Parliament, but the Parliament that summoned the King. It is significant to note that monarchy had after a long interval been renewed in his person by the vote of the two houses, as the result of general elections.

(*ii*) *The Religious Question.* The second important event is the religious controversies of the Age. The religious settlement of the restoration was not conceived in the same

spirit of compromise which marked the political and social settlement. The religion of the King was suspected. The brother of Charles II who was the heir-apparent. was an avowed Papist. There was a prevalent suspicion of Catholics. In 1678, a clergyman named Titus Oates, who figures prominently in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* as Corah, spread lies as to the criminal plots of the Roman Catholics to murder the king and restore Catholicism in England. The secret dealings of Charles II with the French King made the people really believe in Oate's elaborate lies. Charles' brother James was known to be an uncompromising Roman Catholic and the prospect of his accession terrified everyone. In such a world of cross current violence, persecution and universal suspicion raged. This has given rise to the massacre of the innocent Roman Catholics. Dryden himself fell a victim to these religious hostilities. With the accession of James, Dryden has converted himself to the Roman Catholic faith. It was then too that he continued to function as the Poet-Laureate, an honour bestowed upon him by Charles II. With the glorious revolution in 1688 and the subsequent accession of William of Orange to the throne, Dryden was mercilessly stripped off the Laureateship and was thrown into oblivion. To his utter disgrace, Dryden saw his enemy Shadwell occupying the honour of Poet-Laureate. Dryden surely must have felt humiliated at that.

(*iii*) *The Glorious Revolution* (*1688*). As we have noted earlier, James succeeded to the throne in 1685. Soon he revealed his Roman Catholic prejudices ; for, James wanted the Parliament of 1685 to subject church and country to Roman Catholicism. The quarrel on this issue between James and the Tory House of Commons was hastened by the rebellion of Monmouth. The Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II, declared himself to be the rightful King of England and led a revolt against James. He was defeated at Sedgemoor and executed. The systematic violations of the loss of the country by James led to the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. James was deposed and replaced by the protestant sovereigns, William of Orange

and Mary. "The true 'Glory' of the British Revolution", says the historian G. M. Trevelyan, "lay in the fact that it was bloodless, there was no civil war, no massacre, no proscription, and above all that a settlement by consent was reached of the religious and political differences that had so long and so fiercely divided men and parties."

2. The Social Aspects of the Age.

(*i*) *The Plague of 1665.* Among the external changes that took place in the life of 'new age' is the great plague which swept London in 1665. It darkened the careless gaiety of the Restoration, The virulence of the visitation of the plague has been commented by many writers among whom Thomas Vincent gave a most impressive description : "The very sinking fears they (the people) have had of the plague brought the plague and death upon many souls, by the sight of a coffin in the streets have fallen into a shivering and immediately the disease has assaulted them ; and the Sergeant Death hath arrested them, and clapt to the doors of their houses upon them, from whence they have come forth no more till they have been brought to their graves."

(*ii*) *The Fire of 1666.* London received shock after shock ; the great plague gave away to the Fire. This disaster came, as it were, unheralded. Pepys, the famous Diarist, notes that the Fire began at the house of the King's baker, who had a shop in Pudding Lane, close by Fish Street Hill. The "most horrid, malicious, bloody flame" continued to sweep London for about four days bringing colossal destruction. It entailed a loss of upwards often millions sterling. About thirteen thousand two hundred houses were destroyed. "The Astronomy professor," as the people called him, Christopher Wren set out for the reconstruction of the town upon the hot ashes.

(*iii*) *The New Literary Classes.* London now saw the emergence of a new literary class. This artist formerly depended for his livelihood upon a patron. This system of aristocratic patronage was dying out. The literary men were

thrown upon the suffrages of a public then rising into existence. Consequently, the range of the public enlarged.

(*iv*) *The Coffee-houses.* The Coffee-houses became the centres around which radiated the thoughtful and intelligent. Politicians, lawyers, clergymen, literary men met at these places to discuss the problems of the day. Thus, we see the author and the public forced into intimate proximity. The Coffee-house was the lineal descendent of the barber's shop, the unit dining and debating halls and the taverns of the Middle Ages. The Coffee-house was the school of art and dialectic at the time. The well-known writers of the day congregated at these places and talked of their friends. It is significant to note that it was at a Coffee-house that Pope found Dryden ; and it was here that Addison talked to his select circle, and Johnson delivered many of his sententious periods.

(*v*) *The Newspapers* : The public needed a more potent medium for the distribution of news and opinions. During the Seventeenth Century London folk came slowly to understand that the newspaper, as Carlyle said, "is an open Forum where all mortals merit their opinions, state their grievances ; a Forum free to every citizen who has three figures and a smattering of grammar." J. R. Williams traces the origin and development of newspapers in his instructive book, *History of English Journalism.* He points out that *Mercurius Gallolelgicus*, a bound book written in Latin and printed at Cologne, published in 1594, probably suggested the title of many later London periodicals. In 1622 came a weekly pamphlet called *Weekly News.* However, there was the evolution of the newspaper.

3. The Literary Tendencies of the Age.

The Restoration period is in sharp contrast with the Elizabethan times. The Elizabethan romantic temper had already spent itself by 1660 and had given way to a new literary order. There was complete break with the past : Subject and style took a new spirit and outlook. The post-Restoration peroid is often called the classical age of English

literature. The differences between the two epochs are very great. The new spirit expresses itself in the following aspects :

(*i*) *Imitation of the Ancients :* The authors of the Restoration Age lacked the genius of the Elizabethans and they had to turn to the classical writers for inspiration and guidance. This tendency, noticeable in the age of Dryden, deepened during the era of Pope.

(*ii*) *Imitation of the French* : Charles II spent most of his years of exile in France. When he was called back to the throne of England, he brought with him a new admiration for French literature. This had a tremendous effect on drama especially on comedy which was the most copious literary product of the age. Moliere set a fashion in comedy then and the English have readily taken to imitate the French comedy. We have a curious combination of French and classical tragedy to produce a new type called the '*heroic play*'. Dryden's *Tyranic Love* is one such.

(*iii*) *The New Classicism* : Elizabethan wit and language have become out of date. Dryden tells us in his *Conquest of Granada* (1670) :

"Wit is now arrived to a more high degree ;
Our native language more refined and free ;
Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
In conversation than those poets write".

This shows how Dryden set out in the belief that the new poetry had broken with the old. "Poetry," says Dryden "has been 'improved' in the interval since the Elizabethans." Dryden adds, "We have to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression, and to make our rhyme so properly a part of verse, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it." This is a significant statement inasmuch as it gives us an idea of the new ideals in verse.

(*iv*) *Development of Literary Forms and Style :* (a) *Poetry* : The romantic school was practically over, and

Milton, its last survivor, was in a state of political eclipse. A new school of good sense in poetry, of which Waller, Denham, Cowley and Davenant were the chiefs, was growing up. "The real importance of these four writers." Saintsbury says, "was the help they gave to the development of heroic couplet, the predestined common form of poetry of the more important kind for a century and a half to come". All the four poets mentioned above did much to fit the couplet for miscellaneous work. It was Dryden who improved upon the wooden responsibility of his predecessor's verse. Edward Albert notes : "Whlie he retained all the couplet's steadiness and force, he gave it an additional vigour, an elegance, and a noble rhythm and beauty."

(*b*) *Drama* : In tragedy, the most novel in the matter of form is the heroic play. This is a new type of tragedy that became prominent after the Restoration. "The chief features of the growth are", as Albert says, "the choice of a great heroic figure for the central passage ; a succession of stage incidents of an exalted character ; a loud declamatory style ; and the rhymed couplet". It was Davenant who introduced the heroic play into England. But Dryden was one of the most skilful exponents of this form. Dryden found in it a cosmopolitan character. "It adopted", as Saintsbury observes, "the English freedom of action, multiplicity of character, and licence of stirring scenes acted *coram populo*. It borrowed lyrical admixture from Italy, exaggerated and bombastic Language came to it from Spain, and to France it owed little more than its rhymed dialogue, and perhaps something of its sighs and flames". The best plays of this type are Dryden's *All for Love* and of Otways' *Venice Preserv'd.*

In comedy, we find a new glitter and an almost universal medium which is prose. Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1718) ; Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1673) and Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707) are notable examples of this kind.

(c) *Prose*: The important figures in prose are Dryden and Bunyan. Dryden's prose is devoted entirely to literary criticism; Bunyan's contribution shows a remarkable development of the prose allegory. The prose of this period shows a profound change in the style. The prose style of the previous age was wayward and erratic, often combrous and often obscure and weighed with a Latinized construction and vocabulary. In Dryden's time, prose acquires a general utility and performance; it is smoothed and straightened, simplified and harmonized. Dryden, Cowley and Bunyan paved the way for Swift and Addison. "For", as Saintsbury says, "the writers of the Restoration are those whose works had the seeds of life in them; who devised or formed the popular tastes of the period, who satisfied that taste, and who trained up successors to prosecute and modify their own work".

CHAPTER II

DRYDEN THE MAN

(*i*) *Personality of Dryden* : Dryden wrote an epistle to his dear friend Congreve on his comedy *The Double-Dealer* (1694), where Dryden 'adjures him to be kind to his remains and to protect his fame from the insulting foe' :

Already I am worn, with cares and age,
And just abandoning the ungrateful stage :
Unprofitably kept at Heaven's expense,
I live a rent-change on his providence ;
But you, when every muse and grace adorn,
When I foresee to better fortune born,
Be kind to my remains ; Oh defend,
Against your judgment, your departed friend !
Let not the insulting foe my fame pursue ;
But shade those laurels which descend to you :
And take for tribute what these lines express ;
You merit more : nor could my love do less.

In fulfilling the duty thus imposed on him by Dryden as expressed in the lines mentioned above, Congreve gave us the authentic 'character' and the first judicial estimate of John Dryden. We reproduce here below Congreve's estimate of the character of Dryden :

"My Dryden had personal qualities to challenge both love and esteem from all who were truly acquainted with him".

"He was of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, easily forgiving injuries, and capable of a prompt and sincere reconciliation with them who had offended him".

"Such a temperament is the only solid foundation of all moral virtues and social endowments. His friendship, where he professed it, went much beyond his profession; and I have been told of strong and generous instances of it by the persons themselves who received them, though his hereditary income was little more than a base competency".

"As his reading has been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of everything that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it. But then his communication of it was by no means pedantic, or impossed upon the conversation; but just such, and went so far as, by the actual turns of discourse in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him; and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehension of others in respect of his own oversight or mistakes. He was of very easy, I may say, of very pleasing access; but something slow and, as it were, different in his advances to others. He had something in his nature that abhorred intrusion into any society whatsoever. Indeed it is to be regretted that he was rather blameable in the other extreme; for that means he was personally less known, and consequently his character might become liable both to misapprehensions and misrepresentations".

"To the best of my knowledge and observation, he was of all men that ever I knew, one of the most modest, and the most easily to be discountenanced in his approaches either to his superiors or his equals".

2. Characteristics of Dryden.

"In a general survey of Dryden's labours," Dr. Johnson has noted, "he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effect of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials".

Dryden delighted to talk and the favourite exercise of his mind is ratiocination. "When once he had engaged himself in disputation," Dr. Johnson tells us, "thoughts flowed in either side : he was now no longer at a loss. He had always objections and solutions at command ; *verbaque provimrem*—give him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter". Allardyce Nicoll points out that Dryden was "self-opinionative. He was a dominating figure, perhaps at times somewhat domineering. Yet he seems to have retained always a certain modesty". In *Gentleman's Magazine* 1745 an old man who remembered him said, "He was in company the modest man that ever conversed".

Dryden was no lover of labour. When he had once written he found no time for correction and improvement. That is why Dr. Johnson comments, "What he thought sufficient he did not stop to make better, and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad". For, Dryden had a great ear. He attended to the craft of sound, as Mark Van Doren points out, but with a man's interest in the muscle, the sinew, and the nerve of a poem that must be both heard and understood as saying something.

3. Influences on Dryden.

In any study of Dryden as man and writer, we have inevitably to go to the literary masters who have wielded a shaping influence or the career of Dryden. Richard Busby, the eminent Headmaster of Westminster School, wasthe influence of Dryden's early years. John Churton Collins writes, "Busby's influence on Dryden was undoubtedly great. He saw and encouraged his peculiar bent. He appears to have allowed him to substitute composition in English for composition in Latin and Greek, and he encouraged him to turn portions of Persius and other common poets into English verse." Dryden is deeply indebted to Waller, Denham and Davenant.

Dryden said of Waller, "Unless he had written none of us could write." The novelty of Waller's expression and

his processes charmed the Augustans, Dryden's ease was ease of mind as well as of metre. From Waller he caught the symmetry of idea or conceit. Dryden equally appropriated Waller's favourite images of the eagle and the halcyon and expressed them with soft and imaginative tone.

The second great influence on Dryden is Denham. Dryden acquired from him the ratiocinative dignity, which forms the hallmark of his poetry. Dryden secured this quality by quiet rhetorical questions, restful aphorisms and meditative enjambment. "Dryden," declared Mark Van Doren, "was peculiarly fitted to lead the rhetorical grand march in English Poetry."

The third influence on Dryden is Davenant. From him Dryden got his preoccupation with the manners of men. To compass these manners, he needed expression and imagination. Expression must be adequate and its primary qualities must be, as Dryden said, "perspicuity, propriety and decency". With this equipment, as Van Doren observes, "Dryden believed that he could supply the smoothest and most powerful variety of poetry. His true form was that of judgment, and his true game was that of common sense."

CHAPTER III

DRYDEN'S LIFE IN OUTLINE

John Dryden was born on the 9th day of August, 1631, at Aldwincle, a village in Northamptonshire. W. D. Christie points out that the birth of Dryden is incorrectly dated in the year 1632 in the inscription on the monument at Westminster Abbey. His parents belonged to families of distinction. His father was one Erasmus Dryden, son of a Baronet of Canons Ashbey. His mother was the daughter of Rev. Henry Pickering, Rector of Aldwincle All Saints. The marriage of Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering took place on the 21st of October, 1630 and our poet was their first child.

Very little is known of the life of Dryden. According to his cousin, Mrs. Breed, "he was bred and had his first learning at Tichmarch''. However, he received the best part of his education at the Westminster School, under the guidance of the famous Headmaster, Dr. Busby. We do not know much about his school days except that it was Dr. Busby who created in him, 'the first and truest taste of Persius.' So in keeping with this Dryden dedicated his translation of the first satire of Persius to Dr. Busby.

In 1650, Dryden left Westminster School to enter the Trinity College, Cambridge. He matriculated on 16th July of the same year and was elected to Westminster scholarship on October 2, 1650. He took his B. A. degree in January, 1654. There is no mention of his Cambridge days in his writing except that he owes a great part of his education to that foundation.

Dryden's father died in June, 1654, and he inherited two-thirds of his father's estate which gave him an income

of £40 a year. He ceased to be a scholar of the Trinity College in 1655 which has deprived him of his Master's degree. Later on in 1668 on the recommendation of King Charles II, he was conferred the M. A. degree by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Rev. Dr. Crichton has assured us that soon after taking his degree, the young Dryden went to London. It was possibly in 1657 that Dryden finally left his college to stay, so says tradition, with Sir Gilbert Pickering, his great-grandfather on his mother's side. Within a year of the Restoration he had become friendly with Sir Robert Howard, son of Earl of Berkshire, and was moving freely in their circle which was no doubt one of the best of the age. The friendship with Sir Robert Howard resulted in two very important things: first, Dryden was introduced to the theatrical art, and secondly, he married the daughter of Sir Robert, Lady Elizabeth Howard on December 1, 1663. A good deal of vague theorising has been expended upon this marriage. Allardyce Nicoll is constrained to believe that "until evidence comes to the contrary, we may assure that the marriage of Dryden and Lady Elizabeth Howard had nothing in it peculiar, and that the son of Erasmus Dryden, the close kinsman of the two baronets, was esteemed a suitable husband for the daughter of a somewhat impoverished earl". It was during this period that Dryden brought out a series of plays. In 1662, he was elected as member to the Royal Society.

Unfortunately, the great Plague broke out in London in 1665 when most of the people fled to the country. Dryden, too, retired to Charlton, Wiltshire, for eighteen months. It was here that he wrote his famous *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. During the ravages of the plague and the great fire the play-houses had been closed. Towards the close of 1666 they were reopened and Dryden continued to write plays from 1666 to 1694.

Charles II died on the 5th of February, 1685. The crown passed to his brother James, who was an avowed Catholic. Probably in order to keep up his laureateship

bestowed on him by Charles II, he quickly changed into Roman Catholicism. It is just possible that, as Allardyce Nicoll argued, "Dryden was searching, as deeply as the spirit of his age permitted him to search, into the depths of his heart, endeavouring in a time of flux and of change to discover some basis on which he might rear a surer and a more stable philosophical belief for himself." Lord Macaulay has questioned the very basis of Dryden's sincerity in his conversion. Defending Dryden, Prof. Saintsbury says, "I believe Dryden to have been, in the transactions of the year 1685-7, thoroughly sincere as far as conscious sincerity went, but of a certain amount of unconscious sincerity, I am by no means disposed to acquit him." Prof. Saintsbury has, of course, given his spirited defence at great length.

Soon came the revolution in 1688 which moved James into exile and put William of Orange and Mary on the throne. This has brought disaster to those who held to the Catholic faith. Dryden lost his post of Poet-Laureate and Historiographer Royal. Dryden quietly retired with dignity to pursue his literary labours. To this period belong some of the finest translations and narrative poems. During the winter of 1699-1700, his infirmities increased. He had long been a martyr to gout and gravel. On 1st May, 1700 he expired at his house in Garard Street. His body lay in state for several days at the College of Physicians and was carried on May 13 with great pomp, and, as Christie says, with all the honour of a public funeral to Westminster Abbey, to be buried in poets' corner beside the graves of Chaucer and Cowley.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORKS OF DRYDEN

The range of Dryden's works is remarkable. David Nichol Smith says : "As poet, he writes satires and epistles, odes and songs, prologues and epilogues, elegies, tales and translations, poems descriptive, argumentative, or didactic ; as dramatist he writes comedies, tragedies, heroic dramas, and operas ; as critic he reviews all the questions in the art of letters that were at issue in his day, and gives the estimate of the greatest poets ; as prose writer, he is master of a style which is equally adaptable to the commonplaces of exposition, the cut and thrust of controversy, and the intimacies of conviction. In every kind of work he excelled. His serious rivals were only in the drama. He admitted that his genius never much inclined him to the stage, and that he had been outdone by some of his contemporaries in comedy. As a poet, and a critic, his pre-eminence was unquestioned.'' It will be convenient to treat this Chapter under three heads : poetry, plays and prose. We shall review here the major works of Dryden.

1. Poetry.

Taine describes the poetic genius of Dryden as "pre-eminently robust and unromantic''. Sir Edmund Gosse describes him as "the strongest poet of the age of prose''. Dryden's poetry deals with common experience, not, of course, anything too metaphysical. His imagination, as Prof. Dobree says, "plays around the actions and passions of men and women as they live out their lives, in soul as well as in body". Otis and Needleman have pointed out : "His poems have the qualities of this plays—some middling

songs and unspontaneous lyrics, careful and melodic versification, and lack of poetic expression of the different emotions. Despite touches of false ornament and operatic banality his odes are splendid. As a verse-satirist and character-writer he is unequalled, for he is consummately superb in handling the heroic couplet that it became established as the fashion of satiric poetry".

Professor Dobree has classified Dryden's poetry into three groups : the occasional, the politico-religious and the translations. The occasional verses consist of epistles, odes, elegies and complimentary addresses. Oliver Cromwell died on the 3rd of September, 1658, and Dryden wrote a poem in honour of his memory. The *Heroic Stanzas* is his first poem of any consequence written in quatrains ; it is very superior to his earlier efforts. The 'Heroic Stanza' was made popular by *Gondibert* of Sir William Davenant which Dryden was reading at that time. It is not antagonistic to the couplet ; rather it is a mere development of the couplet.

Richard, son of Oliver Cromwell, succeeded him and proved himself a great failure. In less than eighteen months of the publication of the *Heroic Stanzas* Charles II was restored. This poem on the face of it represents reversal of Dryden's political opinions. Nevertheless, it marks an advance in craftsmanship. Nicoll tells us, "Here again Dryden essayed experiments in the couplet form, endeavouring to make his verse smoother, his ideas more lucid, his sentences more polished. Here we meet for the first time what was to be his true melody. All that had gone before may be regarded, when compared with this, as mere apprentice efforts".

1666 is a "wonderful year" which marks two very important events : first, the war with Holland ; and secondly the Great Fire of London. Dryden has given a spirited historical account of these events in *Annus Mirabilis* (1667). The first two-thirds of the poem describes the engagement with the Dutch in alliance with France culminating in the naval victory over the Dutch on July

25th ; the last third treats of the Great Fire which swept a great part of London during the first week of September.

Dryden wrote a few odes and elegies. Dryden's first *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* was written in November 1687, at the request of the musical society formed four years before the celebration of the feast of St. Cecilia, the guardian saint of music.

The Ode on Anne Killigrew (1686) was written at the time of the funeral ceremony. This has received high praise from critics of eminence. Johnson pronounced it the best in the language. The only elegy which rings true is that *On the Death of Mr. Purcell.* Here, we feel, the poet was truly touched, and has been thrilled by the majesty of the figure that had passed away.

Besides these elegiac pieces, there are the two odes for St. Cecilia's Day, the one produced in 1687, which we have noted earlier, and the second in 1697. Both are beautiful, with exquisite melodies of their own, but when we compare them together, the latter seems inexpressibly the more perfect of the two. It is called *Alexander's Feast ; or, the Power of Music, An Ode in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day : 1697.*

Among the politico-religious poems are *Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal, Mac Flecknoe, Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther.* Dr. Ian Jack gives a summary of the occasion of *Absalom and Achitophel* : "In 1681 a crisis occurred in the conflict between Shaftesbury and his followers, who wished to exclude the Catholic Duke of York from succession to the throne, and those who stood with the King himself in favour of true succession". Towards the end of the year, Shaftesbury was to be brought before a Grand Jury, and Dryden was asked probably, by the King himself, to write a poem in opposition to the flood of pamphlets stating the Whig case. "The publication of *Absalom and Achitophel* about the middle of November was no doubt timed to influence Shaftesbury's trial". It is the greatest political verse-satire in the language. There is energetic presentation of the political principles on both

sides, dignified but damaging characterization, deadly wit, blazing diction, devastating invective. It adapts a Biblical narrative of Absalom's rebellion against King David to the political situation.

Shaftesbury was freed from the charge of high treason on 24th November, 1681, when the Grand Jury threw out the bill against him, and the Whigs in their exultation struck a medal in his honour. It bore his bust and name. Charles II is said to have given Dryden the hint for writing *The Medal* (1682).

The poets who supported Shaftesbury naturally rushed once more into verse. The attacks were personal and Dryden, slightly stung by them, prepared to replies. The first was a poem called *Mac Flecknoe* issued in 1682. Flecknoe is represented as the symbol of the mediocre versifier—the holder of first place in the realm of stupidity who abandons his crown of dullness to Shadwell.

Dryden, for a time, turns to the theological controversies of the age. He wrote a didactic verse-thesis called *Religio Laici* (1682). Here Dryden supported the Protestant Church of England against the Catholics. But in 1687 came out *The Hind and the Panther* an allegorical beast-fable defending the Catholic faith against the Protestants. This poem was obviously written when James II, an avowed Catholic, came to the throne. In these poems Dryden was trying to discover, as Nicoll says, "some basis on which he might rear a surer and a more stable philosophical belief for himself".

The third classification of Dryden's poetry, which Dobree did, is the Translations. Dryden was a frequent translator. By these translations, as T. S. Eliot observed, "Dryden helped to form our English tongue". The age, we must remember, was an age of classical. It looked back to Rome and endeavoured to imitate the Latin writers. Dryden has translated in 1697 *The Work of Virgil.* It was a vigorous but reckless translation. The Virgilian grandeur is absent and Dryden's rhetoric prevails. In 1700 he

published *Fables Ancient and Modern* which are successful verse paraphrases of tales by Homer, Ovid, Bocaccio and Chaucer.

2. Plays.

Dryden is a faithful reflex of his times even in his plays. As Otis and Needleman have commented : "Dryden reveals skill in devising the kind of situations and type of performance demanded by his frivolous and somewhat debauched audience, which anticipated not human action or genuine passion but rhetorical discussion of love and indecency of expression. His comedies pandered deliberately to the corrupt taste of the Merry Monarch's court ; and, in later years, Dryden himself regretted their catchpenny character. The comedies are often interspersed with songs, frequently excellent, but like his Prologues and Epilogues, just as frequently disfigured by the *double-entendre* and coarseness of sentiment. Its prose parts, according to T. S. Eliot, "are couched in a transition prose rather than in the prefected style of his best prefaces. Although condemned by Horace Walpole as being compounded of bombast and heroic obscenity, his tragedies contain lines still current and speeches still rhetorically powerful. His dramas are immoderate in humour and extravagant in action, and are possessed of a comic imagination impoverished to depletion by the conventional machinery of low jokes and intrigue. Yet throughout there are evidences of clear thinking, sure touch, excellent versification, copious power to carve out uninspired thoughts, powerful declamatory dialogue, and charming prefaces''. Dryden's theatrical productions may be conveniently classified as under : Heroic Plays, Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, Tragedies, Adaptations and Collaborations.

The heroic play is a new offshoot of tragedy that became prevalent after the Restoration, the originator of this species of writing in English being Davenant. Dryden is one of the most skilful exponents of this form. "The chief features of the new growth", says Edward Albert, "are the choice of a great figure for the central personage ; a succession of stage incidents of an exalted character,

which often, as Dryden himself remarked, became ridiculous through their extravagance; a loud declamatory style; and rhymed couplet". In this category come the *Indian Emperor (1665)*, *Tyranick Love (1669)*, *The Conquest of Granada (1, 1673, II, 1670-71) Aureng-Zebe (1675).*

The *Indian Emperor* (*1665*) was Dryden's first original play, his first heroic play. Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law, had with the assistance of Dryden himself, produced a play called the *Indian Queen* (1663-64) and to this the *Indian Emperor* is a sequel. The play is deficient in dramatic character and artificial in diction. But there are a few songs which have a haunting, reflective beauty. In 1669 appeared the play of *Tyranick Love*, as Saintsbury puts it, a compound of beauties and absurdities of the most frantic description. The *Conquest of Granada* appeared in 1670. T. S. Eliot says that Dryden never wrote a better play in 'rimed' couplets than the present one. There are elaborate scenic effects and sonorous declamation. Dryden's last and best heroic tragedy is *Aureng-Zebe* (*1675*). The source of this play is Francis Bernier's *Historie de la Derniere Revolution des Etats du Grand Mogol.* It is free from the rant, the preposterous bustle, and the skill more preposterous length of the conquest of Granada.

Dryden himself admitted that he was not cut out for writing comedy, that he lacked "that gaiety of humour which is required", and that "some of my contemporaries, even in my own partial judgment, have outdone me in comedy". Dryden wrote a commonplace prose-comedy of "humours", *The Wild Gallant* written in 1662-63 and published in 1669. He has brought out *Sir Martin Marall* (w. 1667; p. 1668), *An Evening's Love* (1671), *Marriage a-la-Mode* (1673), *The Assignation* (1673), *Amphityon* (1690) *Marriage a-la Mode* embodies the quintessence of Restoration Comedy. His most original comic drama is *The King Keeper* (1678) published in 1680. This was prohibited after three performances because, as Dryden explained, it suffered from the crime of expressing too much of the vice it described. Langbaine and Saintsbury praise it for its dramatic qualities. Scott and Nicoll deplore its indecencies.

Among the tragi-comedies are *Rival Ladies* (1664), *Secret-Love* (1668), *The Spanish Friar* (1681) and *Love Triumphant* (1694). These plays have not been well received by the public.

Now we come to an important species of dramatic art, namely tragedy. It is in these plays that Dryden shows his talents. It is here again that Dryden turns to use Blank Verse. His tragedy *All for Love* (1678) is in blank verse and is considered to be his masterpiece. He handled the story of Antony and Cleopatra in his own way. In his style Dryden professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare. The result is the dramatic blank verse, at once concise and rich, flexible, capable of grandeur and also of lightness. *Don Sebastian* (1690) is another of his plays. It has an intricate plot and possesses tragic power. His last heroic play based on Plutarch's account of the Spartan is *Cleomenes* (1692). The songs of *Cleomenes* show the fertility of Dryden's poetic genius. Among his adaptations and collaborations are the *Tempest* (1670), *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) and *Oediupus* (1679). He has also produced operas like *The State of Innocence*, and *Fall of Man* (1677), *Albaion and Albanus* and *King Arthur* (1691).

3. Prose.

It is with Dryden that English prose murks a definite break with the past. After reading Dryden's prose Matthew Arnold exclaimed, "Here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if only we knew how". Previous writers like Sir Thomas Browne, Clarendon, and Hobbes, had done remarkable work in prose. But their prose, as Edward Albert puts it, "was way-ward and erratic, often cumbrous and often obscure, and weighted with a latinized construction and vocabulary". Albert goes on, "In Dryden's time prose begins definitely to find its feet. It acquires a general utility and a permanence ; it is smoothed and straightened, simplified and harmonized. This is the age of average prose and prepares the way for the work of Swift and Addison who stand on the threshold of modern prose style".

The Restoration age saw a new spirit in the field of letters. Psychologically, this spirit involved the substitution of critical for the imaginative temper. Dryden was the great exponent of this spirit and he was the first modern English critic. This is what led Dr. Johnson to pronounce that Dryden is "The Father of Modern English Criticism". It was with the publication of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in 1668 that English criticism attained an individual character of its own. Dryden considers in this *Essay* the three chief types of Drama: The Classical Drama of the Greeks and Romans, The Neo-classical Drama of the French, and the Romantic Drama of the English. Among other matters, Dryden undertakes to justify the use of rhyme in place of blank verse. It is interesting to note that he himself was not free from the use of blank verse. Above all, what impresses us in this *Essay* is the conversational tone which is made effective by the use of the dialogue.

Prefaces and Dedications were used by the Restoration writers to get on easy terms with their readers. They are just like prologues to plays establishing a friendly contact between the actors and the audience. This "willing to get together" with the reader and a corresponding style to write impersonally are characteristic of Restoration prose. Dryden wrote Dedications to *The Rival Ladies* (1664), *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), *Examen Poeticum* (1693). He wrote a number of prefaces to his plays. His *Preface to Fables* (1700) is an outstanding example of literary appreciation. It is also famous for its discovery of Chaucer.

Dryden's contribution to English prose is to make the formless prose of the seventeenth century clear and flexible. He did away with the Latin construction and reduced the length of the sentence and made it the unit of prose style in place of the paragraph. Dryden's prose is characterized by clearness, vigour, a wonderful felicity of phrasing and a colloquial ease. Matthew Arnold calls it "Measured Prose", and it is this that has paved the way for those glorious masters like Addison, Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson.

CHAPTER V

ASPECTS OF DRYDEN'S POETRY

1. Is Dryden a Poet ?

It has often been asked whether Dryden is a poet. To answer that question fully, there is needed a definition of poetry and proper appreciation of Dryden's place in English literature. Many in the nineteenth century condemned Dryden and declared that his throwing over of emotion denied him the title of poet. Such a view has arisen because they were urged by romantic theories and educated on the melodies of Keats and of Shelley. This becomes more obvious if we take the example of the great Dr. Johnson who considered the music of "Lycidas" as "harsh". This is because Dr. Johnson has been brought up and breed over the music of Dryden and of Pope. This question is well answered by Allardyce Nicoll : "Beauty there must be in all poetry—beauty and melody of diction—that is the primal part of it ; but in addition to that there must be also this power of generalisation, this ability to make permanent the evanescent trivial things of life, to give the atmosphere of universality to objects and to thoughts and to desires which otherwise would be but temporary and individual with no significance to other men. This power Dryden shares with the greatest poet of our land..................Lacking emotion, disdaining passion. Dryden yet stands alongside our best poets. He is not only the representative of the age of the Restoration, the highest of a second-rate school of poets, almost denied entrance into Parnassus. He is the poet of reason, just as Keats is the poet of emotion. There can be no question of rating the one above and below the other ; for in the world of art many diverse

forms and persons are equal. Shakespeare may stand alongside Homer. Dryden may meet on equal terms the finest and most perfect poets of the passions''.

Such is the stimulating defence of one of the great admirers of John Dryden. T. S. Eliot, Mark Van Doren and Professor Verall have followed suit in paying homage to that great poet. What constitutes a great poet, Saintsbury says, is supremacy in his own type of poetical expression. It is from this standpoint that he argues; "When we want to see whether a man is a great poet or not, let us take him in his commonplaces and see what he does with them. Here are four lines which are among the last that Dryden wrote, they occur in the address to the Duchess of Ormond, who was, it must be remembered, by birth Lady Margaret Somerset :

> O daughter of the rose, whose cheeks unite
> The differing titles of the red and white,
> Who heaven's alternate beauty well display,
> The blush of morning and the milky way.

The ideas contained in these are as old, beyond all doubt, as the practice of love-making between the persons of Caucasian type of physiognomy, and the images in which those ideas are expressed are in themselves as well worn as the stones of the Pyramids, But I maintain that any poetical critic worth his salt could without knowing who wrote them, but merely from the arrangement of the words, the rhythm and cadence of the line, and the manner in which the images are presented write, "This is a poet, and probably a great poet, across them, and that he would be right in doing so. When such a critic, in reading the works of the author of these lines, finds that the same touch is, if not invariably, almost always present, that in the handling of the most unpromising themes, the *most rayonnants*, the *mots de lumiere* are never lacking, that the suggested images of beauty never fail for long together ; then he is justified in striking out the 'probably' and writing 'This is a great poet.' If he tries to go further, and to range his great poets in order

of merit, he will almost certainly fail. He cannot count up the beauties in one, and then the beauties in the other, and strike the balance accordingly. He can only say, 'There is the faculty of producing those beauties ; it is exercised under such conditions, and with such results, that there is no doubt of its being a native and resident faculty, not a mere casual inspiration of the moment ; and this being so, I pronounce the man a poet, and a great one'. This can be said of Dryden, as it can be said of Shelley, or Spenser, or Keats, to name only the great English poets who are most dissimilar to him in subject and in style. All beyond this is a treacherous speculation.''

2. Representative Character of Dryden's Poetry.

The first thing in Dryden's poetry that strikes us is the representative character of his work. No one in the gamut of English Literature is more representative of his age than Dryden. His work contains a faithful represenation of the whole literary movement for the later half of the seventeenth century. As E. E. Keller has observed, "Above all, he has a representative character. This is a peculiar character not always belonging to the greatest men. Milton, for example, though the highest name in his age, does not represent that age ; and many other lofty intellects, though in one epoch are of another. But Dryden has his character to a degree not equalled by his successor Pope himself." His representative character in relation to the men of his time is still more remarkable. He was often seen in Will's Coffee-house surrounded by numerous wits. The great diarist of the times, Samuel Pepys, craved for the friendship of Dryden. He was always a domineering personality in conversation. He talked and talked endlessly on the political, social and the intellectual problems of the age. That is why we find the oratorical tone ringing in every movement of his verse. As Saintsbury has said, "Dryden was not only in his literary work a typical Englishman of his time and a favourably typical one ; he was almost a representative in point of character. The time was not the most showy or attractive in the moral

history of the nation, though perhaps it looks to us not a little worse than it was. But it must be admitted to have been a time of shameless coarseness in language and manners; of virulent and blood-thirsty party-spirit; of almost unparalleled self-seeking and political dishonesty; and of a flattering servility to which, in the same way hardly any parallel can be found".

3. Dryden's Ironic Vision and Political Satires.

It is exactly at this point that Dryden has set out, as Ben Jonson would say 'to whip the ragged follies of the time.' It is also here that Dryden's ironic vision is born as a corrective to the follies of the age. But Dryden's satirical outbursts are not those of Ben Jonson, Pope or Byron. There is something Chaucerian in its character. Temperamentally Dryden is a kin of Chaucer. This also goes to justify Dryden's passion for Chaucer and the consequent revival of Chaucerian tradition. It is touched, as Dryden insisted that all good satire should be touched with concession and even with sympathy. Scott tells us "while Dryden seized, and dwelt upon, and aggravated, all the evil features of his subject, he carefully retained just as much of its laudable traits as preserved him from the charge of want of candour." The political satires of Dryden have produced a sensation in England. He never took sides. As Sir Walter Releigh has observed, "The warfare of parties has raged on, with varying fortunes, for more than two hundred years since Dryden wielded his two-edged sword, and the honours are still divided. But it would be a mistake to regard Dryden as first and foremost a party man. No mere party pamphleteer has now, or ever, could win the place that he holds in English letters. He is of the centre; his party is the party of Aristophanes and of Rabelais. His best work is inspired by the sanity that inhabits at the heart of things. He lived in a turbulent age, and he was a fighter. But all extremists are his natural enemies. His weapons can be used, on occasion by either side. He hated wrong-headed theorists and fanatics, who commonly impose their alliance, a heavy burden, on the

reforming party in the state. He also hated all contented and self-sufficient dullards, who commonly impose their alliance, a heavy burden on the reforming party in the state. He also hated all contented and self-sufficient dullards, who for the most part have to be supported, a grievous weight, by the party that stands for the established order. He makes war on both, with laughter that flashes and cuts".

4. Dryden and the Religious Note.

The didactic note in Dryden's poetry is a direct offshoot of the theological controversy of the seventeenth century. The two famous didactic poems of Dryden are *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*. The first poem which is a didactic verse thesis in closely-laced couplets, gives a "Layman's Faith"—an eloquently clear and sustained, if not too cogent, argument against Deism, and, crowning that, a spirited support of the Protestant Church of England especially against the Catholics and the Presbyterians. The second, *The Hind and the Panther*, written after the accession of James, is an allegorical defence of the Roman Catholic Church as against the Church of England. "A milk-white hind immortal and unchanged" is the symbol of the Roman Church, pursued by the panther, "fairest creature of the spotted kind" (Church of England).

Reading *Religio Laici*, we can plainly see that he had moved over from the puritanism in which he had been reared. As Allardyce Nicoll says, "Living in an age of scepticism, embracing that scepticism to a certain extent, yet always with some inheritance of an Elizabethan spirit about him, Dryden was ever seeking to find a point where he might lay his doubts at rest." *Religio Laici*, or to quote Nicoll, "Dryden was searching, as deeply as the spirit of his art permitted him to search, into the depths of his heart, endeavouring in a time of flux and of change to discover some basis on which he might rear a surer and a more stable philosophical belief for himself." With the accession of James, a Catholic, Dryden promptly turned from Anglicanism to the Church of Rome. It was at this

time that he wrote *The Hind and the Panther*. Nicoll observes in this connection, "The actual conversion, I have not the slighest doubt, was the result of not purely disinterested resolves. The Poet-Laureate of the Catholic King was more likely to succeed if he himself were a Chatholic. At the same time is to be observed that gradual advance in Dryden's religious convictions, and it cannot be denied that once he had joined the Catholic Church, he found that for which he truly had craved. That his conversion materially helped him in the next few years cannot be gainsaid, but we must remember that in the time of the Protestant reactions Dryden never deviated from his faith."

However, it has been customary to criticise Dryden on the ground that he joined the Roman Church in order to carry favour with James II. As T.J. Treadaway points out: "Dryden professed allegiance to three established religions in succession ; he was a Puritan under Cromwell, an Anglican under Charles II, and a Catholic under James II." In this connection it would be interesting to go through the following dissertations: R. K. Root : "Dryden's Conversion to the Roman Catholic Faith." *Publication of the Modern Language Association of America*, XXII, New series, XV (1907) ; W.L. Macdonald : "John Dryden : 1631—2" ; *The Bookman* CXXII (1930—31) ; Arnold Jordan : "The Conversion of John Dryden," *The month*, CLVIII (1931) ; T. J. Treadaway : "The Religious Sincerity of John Dryden," *The Ecclesiastical Review*, LXXXV (1931).

5. Dryden and the Lyrical Note.

We come across in Dryden's plays some fine lyrics, and the other experiments which he made, are his elegiac odes and his odes on St. Cecilia. Allardyce Nicoll in his preceptive introduction to Dryden, notes, : "In treating Dryden's lyrics we must bear in mind two things. The first is that the age in whicb he lived had not lost that love of music which is so apparent in the time of Shakespeare. Pepys adored music, and Pepys was but one of many. One of the chief innovations in the Restoration theatre is concerned with the development of the orchestra. The

native English musical strain which gave to us the pleasant madrigals and ditties of earlier days, which produced as a final culmination the genius of Purcell, was not to be killed until the appearance of the Italian Opera in the eighteenth century. It was being affected in the late seventeenth century by the continental tastes of Charles, but it was still a dominating and a vigorous thing. This love of music, combined with the desire for novelty in the theatre led toward the introduction of numerous lyrics in the tragedies and in the comedies of the time. As the years advanced, these musical interludes increased, until, toward the end of the century, there was no appreciable difference between a play and an Opera. As Dryden's songs are mainly dramatic, they must be considered in close relation to this development. The second point to be observed is the decay of the lyric spirit in this peroid. With the rise of the heroic couplet and the domination of reason in poetic realms, the lyric tended to take a lower place among the compositions of the poets. The Romantic Revival of the mid-eighteenth century is apparent first as a revival of lyric measures. The lyric that endured over the intervening period had a strictly limited existence. In metre, the Restoration song is usually regular, of few lines to the stanza, or it is frankly irregular, in a mistaken effort to capture that classic "Pindaric" rhythm foisted on the world by Abraham Cowley. On the other hand, the lyric retained more freedom than the couplet, permitting the introduction of feet other than the plain ambus, preserving everywhere a trifle of Elizabethan grace and liberty. In subject-matter, however, it suffered a sad restriction. Instead of treating all themes, the Restoration song became, with the exception of the 'Pindaric' odes, almost exclusively a love-ditty, cavalier in sentiment and lacking emotional sincerity.

"That Dryden wrote lyrics, therefore, is but another sign of his relation to his age; but that he succeeded so

signally marks him out as being in some ways above his age. Dryden, we must remember, had many ties of kinship with the poets who had gone before him; and it is the presence in him of the Elizabethan characteristics which makes him stand higher than his contemporaries. In the measures of his couplets, he has not forgotten the delicate rhythms of previous singers, so that his lyrics and his odes have melodies in them which for the most part are lacking in the similar productions of the contemporaries. His pure lyrics, his songs, may be mostly love-poems, but they have a note that appears to be a combination of Elizabethan and of Restoration feelings."

CHAPTER VI

DRYDEN AND HIS CRAFT

Introduction

Dr. Johnson declared, "What was said of Rome, addressed by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, *lateritiam inverit marmoream reliquit*, he found it brick and left it marble." In his *Clark Lectures for 1754-5*, Robert Graves ridiculed by adding 'native brick, imported marble.' Professor Saintsbury in his brilliant study of Dryden launched as attack on Dr. Johnson's statement and found Dryden's greatness in a fresh field, that is, craftsmanship : "In one of his own last letters Dryden states that his life-object had been to improve the language and especially the poetry. He had accomplished it. With one different estimate of the value of old English literature, we cannot indeed adopt Johnson's famous metaphor, and say that he found English of brick and left it of marble." The comparison of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* to 'brick', with *Don Sabastin* and the *Spanish Friar* for 'marble', would be absurd. But in truth the terms of the comparison are inappropriate. English as Dryden found it—and it must be remembered that he found it not the English of Shakespeare and Bacon, not even the English of such survivals as Milton and Taylor, but the English of persons like Cowley, Davenant and their likes—was not wholly marble or wholly brick. No such metaphor can conveniently describe it. It was rather an instrument of machine which had in times past turned out splendid work, but work comparatively limited in kind, and liable to constant flaws and imperfections of more or less magnitude. In the hands of the men who had lately worked it, the good

work had far less been in quantity and inferior in quality: the faults and plans had been great and numerous. Dryden so altered the instrument and its workings that, at its best, it produced a less splendid result, than before, and became less suited for some of the highest applications, but at the same time became available for a far greater variety of ordinary purposes, was far surer in its working, without extraordinary genius on the part of the worker, and was almost secure against the grosser imperfections. The forty years' work which is at once the record and the example of this accomplishment is itself full of faults and blemishes, but they are always committed in the effort to improve. Dryden is always striving, and consciously striving to find better literary forms, a better vocabulary, better metres, better constructions, better style. We can see the force of Dr. Johnson's remark, Professor Dobree, argues, and he is very right, "In the middle of the century it was something like a magnificent heap of rubble; he left it shapely and habitable. Or if we prefer on organic metaphor, let us say that he found a tangled forest shrubbery, and left it a grove of flowering trees. We have his beautifully, modulated flow, the variation of phrase from the long supple sentence to the epigrammatic thrust, as also vigour, the incisive stress where he wants it, the clarification of meaning. 'He is always shrewd and penetrating', Landor commented, 'explicit and perspicuous, concise where conciseness is desirable, and copious where copiousness can yield delight.' And though Landor was speaking of his poetry, the judgment is as true of his prose which, when he is in a gay confident, is as full of lively imagery as his verse. So it remained for Dryden to bring metrical harmony to perfection in his own poems and, as W.D. Christie puts it, to give purity and new wealth and capability to the English language.

1. Dryden and the Heroic Douplet.

Dryden once said, "The genius of our countrymen (is) rather to improve an invention than to invent themselves." The invention that was improved by Dryden was the heroic

couplet. The heroic couplet was, of course, no novelty in English. In has been patronised for poems of length and for general use. Couplets had been written by Chaucer: free couplets were written by Marlowe. But the heroic couplet is the development of an intellectual age. In his fortieth year, he wrote *Eassy of Dramatic Poesy*. Thereafter, for a dozen years, he devoted to the drama and the drama solved for him his metrical problem. It was in his plays that he learned how to write the heroic couplet. Allardyce Nicoll points out : It is normally iambic, more so, perhaps, in Pope than in Dryden, more so in Dryden's later than in his earlier work, but all the time the measure is regular. We find, it is true, in some early works of Dryden a more flexible utterance, but even in those the regular ten-syllabled iambic line had a dominating preponderance. Almost the only licence habitually permitted by the poet is an occasional trochaic opening to a line. The rigidity of the iambic decasyllabic line, however, is not the only point of note in the true heroic couplet. This made for a greater sense of ordered form, which contracts well with the sometimes chaotic utterance of the followers of Donne but in the reaction there was required as well balance and antithesis did not reach their fullest expression until the time of Pope, but they were popularised by Dryden, and had been utilized almost half a century before his time.

"With this balance went, too, in the heroic couplet, the end-stopped line. Run-on lines always make for looseness of structure, whereas Dryden and his compeers desired firmness and strength above all things. Practically, all Pope's lines are end-stopped : most of Dryden's later lines are. If he was less strict in his first poems, that was only because he was tentatively feeling his way into his art through the chaos of previously conflicting forms.

"What Dryden did in reality was to take up the elements hinted at by his predecessors, especially by Fairfax, Waller, Denham, Cowley and D'Avenant, welded them into a kind of settled system, cast off the metaphysical in thought and the loose in expression, and hand on to his

successors a well-made and well-tested instrument of poetic expression."

2. Character of Dryden's Couplets.

Dryden has established himself as a master of couplet-form which has become one of the chief forms of English poetry. He still remains their most individual writer. David Nichol Smith notes that Dryden's couplets "have a lift and swell which carry the reader in continual expectation which often carried Dryden himself beyond the strict limits of metre, and though in his laxer moments he tended to use the triplet and the Alexandrine too frequently, and occasionally even the line of fourteen syllables, at his best he won by them conclusive and characteristic effect." To quote a few examples :

> "For close Designs and crooked counsels fit,
> Sagacious, Bold, Turbulent of wit,
> Restless, unfixt in principles and place,
> In power unpleased, impatient of Disgrace ;
> A fiery soul, which working out its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay.
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay"

That is the description of 'false Achitophel.' Giving the character of Zimri, Dryden says :

> "Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong ;
> Was Everything by starts, and nothing long :
> But in the course of one revolving Moon,
> Was Chymist, Fidler, Statesman, and buffoon ;
> Then all for women, painting, rhiming, drinking.
> Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking."

The couplets move with such swiftness. In no other writer is the movement so rapid as in Dryden. He swings along in exuberant vigour and careless ease. Reading such couplets we think of Dryden, as Nichol Smith puts it, as a great craftsman who exercises his craft with careless confidence and unflagging zest.

3. Note on Dryden's Diction.

Allardyce Nicoll cautions us that there are many who have still to learn the melody of Dryden. The truth is that there are many melodies in the concert hall of poetry. There are beauties and excellences in Dryden and his followers, which are lacking in Shelley and the Romanticists. Bonanny Dobree's excellent evaluation of Dryden's diction is worth quoting :

His diction is in time with his ideas; disciplines himself to use the precise word rather than the word with a vague aura of association, endeavouring always to express as cleary and firmly as possible what he means to say. In a way, moreover, that is pleasantly acceptable. 'Would not Donne's *Satires* which abound with so much wit, appear more charming, if he had taken care of his words, and his numbers ?' For the musician in the poet was not to be ignored, as he might have seemed to suggest in the passage quoted above. For

> "by the harmony of words we elevate the mind to a sense of devotion, as our solemn music, which is inarticulate poesy, does in churches".

Here, of course, is the central question of pleasure and profit, of the aesthetic as against the moral. 'Delight', he said in the *Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), 'is the chief, if not the only end of poesy : instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights' ; though few pages later he says that poetry must 'resemble natural truth, but it must be ethical'. He sums up his attitude in his *Discourse on Satire* (1693) :

> "They who will not grant me, that pleasure is one of the ends of poetry, but that is only a means of compassing the only end, which is instruction, must yet allow, that, without the means of pleasure, the instruction is but a bare and dry philosophy : a crude preparation of morals, which we may have from Aristotle or Epictetus, with more profit than from any poet."

But words, he held, were only the colouring of the poem-picture; what was important was the idea, and the structure, though the colouring was what first struck the eye. So whatever words he uses, his is still the languge that might be spoken by men to men. It is never pejoratively speaking, 'poetic'."

4. Dryden's Influence.

Dryden in his own day and in the eighteenth century was accepted as one of the greatest English poets. But the nineteenth century hesitated to accord that title for the reasons we have cited elsewhere. This does not mean that there were none in the nineteenth century who went to him for his superb skill in satire and craftsmanship. With the publication of Professor Saintsbury's biography of Dryden, the twentieth century writers have gone all the way for a deeper and perceptive study of this poet. Due credit should be given to such scholars like Churton Collins, W. D. Christie, Allardyce Nicoll, T. S. Eliot, Professor Verall, Bonanny Dobree, A. Lubbock, K. Young, W. Frost.

Poets and critics of the eighteenth century claimed kinship with him and loved him for his continuous endeavour to improve English poetry. In a letter addressed to Mrs. Steward on 7th November, 1699, Dryden said, "The Court rather speaks kindly of me that does anything for me, though they promise largely ....If they will consider me as a man who has done my best to improve the language and especially the poetry and will be content with my acquiescence under the present government, and for bearing satire on it, that I can promise, because I can perform it." The continuous endeavour to improve English poetry was Dryden's service to the nation. One thing which has struck everybody was his mastery in verse. Pope confessed that he had learnt it wholly from Dryden's works. Gray maintained that if there was any excellence in his own numbers, he had learned it wholly from that great poet. Johnson said that he 'turned the members of English poetry' and attributed to him 'the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre.'

Byron esteemed and admired him. The heroic couplet was revived in the nineteenth century by Leigh Hunt and shows his exquisite skill of it in the *Story of Rimini*. It was Leigh Hunt who introduced Keats to the heroic couplet.

Evaluating Dryden's influence Professor Dobree says, "His influence has been enormous, but this is always a difficult matter to assess. It does, however, seem to be undoubted that he made the ode live on as an English form, which he made shapely rather than formalized. It is certain that his *Saint Cecilia's Odes*, *Anne Killigrew*, and perhaps others, prepared the ground for the odes of Collins and Gray, and made possible Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' (which Dryden would have disliked for its imprecision) and the 'Ode to Duty'. By his example he sustained the variety of the lyric and without him, for better or for worse, eighteenth century poetry would have been very different from what it is : to begin with, one may say, no Dryden, no Pope', with all that involves. It may be noted further that poets have turned to him in their distress, as Keats began to do when he found that Milton failed him. Craftsmen in poetry—that is to say good poets—even now are not slow to salute him."

CHAPTER VII

GENESIS OF ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

It is generally acclaimed that *Absalom and Achitophel* is the greatest achievement of Dryden which finds hardly any parallel in the whole range of English literature. The poem has evoked great interest in Dryden's contemporaries and in the succeeding generations of students of poetry. Some have been attracted to it for its portrait gallery, some for its satire, some for its Biblical parallelism and yet some for its versification. Before we take up the various aspects of the poem we do well to acquaint ourselves with certain preliminary data.

1. Occasion of the poem.

As we have noted earlier, Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660. He had married Catherine of Braganza in May 1662, but he had no issue by her. Seventeen long years had passed, but they were not likely to have any issue. Consequently, in 1679, the question of the succession began to assume prominence. In the event of the King leaving no legitimate children, the crown would revert to the Duke of York. But the Duke of York was an avowed Papist. Prejudice against Papace was strongest as a result of which two great parties were formed. John Churton Collins sums up the position of the two parties : "The one party insisted on the exclusion of the Duke of York from the right of succession, on the ground of his religion. These were the Petitioners, afterwards nicknamed Whigs and the Exclusionists ; their leader was the Earl of Shaftesbury. The other party, strongest among churchment and the aristocracy, were anxiously, partly in accordance with the theory of the divine right of Kings and

the duty of passive obedience, and partly with an eye to their own interests, to please the King by supporting the claim of his brother. These were the Abhorrers, afterwards nicknamed Tories."

The Exclusionists aimed at inflaming the public opinion against the Catholics. Titus Oates exerted his energies to achieving the end and began spreading lies that the Roman Catholics were indulging in criminal plots to murder the King and restore Catholicism in England. The secret dealings of Charles II with the French King made the people readily believe Oates' lies. The leading principle of the Exclusionists led by Earl of Shaftesbury now became hatred for the Duke of York and Popery. Shaftesbury, at last, launched a plot to secure, if possible, the succession of the Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate child of Charles II by Lucy Walters. With this object, he attempted to gain the confidence of the people and the King. Popular excitement increased. All centred on the Exclusion Bill, which, on the 11th of Nov., 1680, triumphantly passed the Commons, but was defeated in the House of Lords. The country was almost on the verge of Civil War. The Parliament was dissolved in January 1681. The popular frenzy was high and was uncontrollable. The next Parliament was summoned to meet at Oxford. It met amid fret and fury and was soon dissolved. The King feared a Civil War and decided to strike a blow against the Earl of Shaftesbury when Churton Collins calls 'the arch-enemy of the public peace.' Shaftesbury was arrested in July and was thrown into the Tower to await his trial at the Old Bailey.

Toward the end of the year, Shaftesbury was to be brought before a Grand Jury and Dryden set to write a 'poem in opposition to the flood of pamphlets stating the Whig case'. The publication of *Absalom and Achitophel* about the middle of November was no doubt timed to influence Shaftesbury's trial. Dryden produced his *Absalom and Achitophel*, says Christie, "probably, with the deliberate object of inflaming public opinion against him and helping to obtain a condemnation". Raleigh tells us: "I do not remember any other case of a pamphlet designed to achieve

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a particular end, pointed to the occasion, topical and allusive in every line, which gained at once, and retained ever after, a place among our great national classics".

The Bill of Indictment against Shaftesbury was thrown out by the Grand Jury on the 24th November. London was overjoyed. A medal was stuck by Shaftesbury's friend to commemorate his acquittal. This circumstance furnished Dryden with the subject of his second satire, *The Medal*, published in March 1682. The Whig poet, Shadwell, came out with a scurrilous reply entitled *The Medal of John Bayes*, which, in turn, provoked him to write *MacFlecknoe* in October 1682. In the following month a second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared. Of this, says Christie, "a small portion was by Dryden, the bulk of the poem being the production of Nahum Tate, who afterwards translated the Psalms into verse, and became in time poet-laureate. Dryden contributed two hundred lines, and he perhaps revised the whole of Tate's work."

2. Who prompted Dryden to write Absalom and Achitophel ?

It was Tonson, who, in 1716 initiated the traditional account of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitopel* with this note : "To the Reader. *In the year 1680 Mr. Dryden undertook the poem of Absalom and Achitophel*, upon the desire of *King Charles the Second.*" W. D. Christie also says that the subject of the poem has been suggested by the King himself. A recent critic, Dr. Ian Jack, also avers : "Dryden was asked by the King himself, to write a poem in opposition to the flood of pamphlets stating the Whig case". Dr. Jack supports his view by adding in the traditional manner : "A note prefixed to the 1716 edition of *the Second Part of A & A* (which is mainly the work of Nahum Tate) is our authority for believing that Dryden's poem was undertaken 'upon the desire of King Charles the Second'. Whether the King indicated the sort of poem he wanted or left the choice to Dryden is unknown".

But in a recent evaluation of this problem, Wallace Maurer of the Ohio State University has shown a new line of approach. Wallace Maurer says, "Dryden, editors and critics on the whole have favoured Tonson's explanation of the genesis of the poem, but for want of decisive information, they have always done so with caution. Giving cause for continued caution is the following letter, which, written by one Richard Mulys to someone in the Duke of Ormond's household a day or two after Dryden's *Absalom* appeared, attributes to a personage other than the King the suggestion made to Dryden that he write the poem :

> 1681, November 19, London.—This day I have sent by the way of the Mr. Anderson a small box with a quart bottle of syrup of figs from Mr. Edmund Waller to her Grace ; in the same box also is a book of Mr. Flatman's humbly dedicated to his Grace, which Mr. Flatman and Mr. Knowles pray you to present, and apologise in Mr. Flatman's behalf for the presumption of his dedication without first having his Grace's permission. I also here send you Mr. Dryden's poem Absalom and Achitophel wherein is honourable mention of my Lord Lieutenant and also of my Late Lord [The Duke of Ormond and his son, the Earl of Ossory]. The piece was writ as I am creditably informed at the instance of our great Minister, Mr. Seymour, but that is a secret to yourself. Pray help forward the enclosed to my brother.

"No writer on Dryden, to my knowledge, has discussed Richard Muly's statement attributing the origin of *Absalom and Achitophel* to the prompting of Dryden by Edward Seymour". Keith Feiling is aware of Muly's letter in *History of the Tory Party 1640—1714* (Oxford, 1924). Hugh Macdonald too cites the letter of another purpose in *John Dryden* : A *Bibliography of Early Editions and of Drydeniana* (Oxford, 1939). But these writers do not explore any connection between Seymour and *Absalom and Achitophel.*

Wallace Maurer in the course of his valuable dissertation examines at length the possibility of Edward Seymour, Dryden's Amiel in the poem, urging Dryden to write *Absalom and Achitophel* and concludes : "So we must, at least, continue to be cautious about accepting the tradition linking King Charles II with the composition of *Absalom and Achitophel*, of course, if we should incline toward Seymour, we would not know exactly what he offered Dryden. But certainly a contemporary rumour that Dryden wrote *Absalom and Achitophel* 'at the instance' of Edward Seymour should not be dismissed as preposterous in the present state of our knowledge."

CHAPTER VIII

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL AS AN ALLEGORICAL SATIRE

Whether or not at the request of Charles II, Dryden had found his great literary opportunities. And, of this, says Ward, "he took advantage in a spirit far removed from that of either the hired bravos or the spiteful lampooners of his age. For this opportunity, he has been unconsciously preparing himself as a dramatist ; and it was in the nature of things, and in accordance with the responsiveness of his genius to the calls made upon it by time and circumstance, that in the season of a great political crisis, he should have rapidly perceived his chance of decisively influencing public opinion by an exposure of the aims and methods of the party of revolution. This he proposed to accomplish, not by a poetic summary of the rights of the case, or by a sermon in verse on the sins of factiousness, corruption and treason, but by holding up to the times and their troubles, with no magisterial air or dictatorial gesture, a mirror in which, under a happily contrived disguise, the true friends and the real foes of their kind and country should be recognised. This was the 'Varronian' form of satire afterwards commended by him, with a well warranted self-consiousness, as the species, mixing serious intent with pleasant manner, to which, among the ancients, several of Lucian's *Dialogues* and, among the moderns, the *Encomium Morial* of Erasmus belong."

1. Satiric Vision of Dryden.

This brings up to one of the most important aspects of Dryden's poetical works. "The true end of satires", Dryden says, "is the amendment of vices by correction".

It is a simple statement, but unfortunately, it does not apply even to all his own satires, quite apart from those of other writers. Yet further, he adds: "Of the best and finest manner of satire... 'tis that sharp and well-mannered way of laughing a folly out of countenance". At his best, Dryden follows this principle—the principle of an artist when, irritation or anger under control, he is at the top of his bent, laughing in a "well-mannered way" quite compatible with sharpness. Dryden's contempt is finely expressed in his character of Achitophel, Zimri and of Shimei, stinging but cool, full of humour and masterly wit. Humour and wit, which delight in incongruities of character and idea, are the means with which the satirist exposes and belittles. Dryden eminently employs this device and achieves masterly effects at every time.

Dryden often indulges, as in *The Medal and MacFlecknoe* in personal satire. Personal gibes were the staple of the Roman *Saturae*. Personal satire can be salty and effective. It can survive only on its intrinsic merits. Dryden follows the principle he deduced from the classical satirists and attacks individuals who exemplify general abuses. Particular persons, he wrote, when they have become public nuisances, "may properly be exposed by name for public examples of vices and follies".

Dryden's satiric vision is primarily that of Aristophanes and of Rabelais. As Nichol Smith puts it, "His best work is inspired by the sanity that inhabits at the heart of things. He lived in a turbulent age, and he was a fighter. But all extremists are his natural enemies. His weapons can be used, on occasion, by either side. He hated wrong-headed theorists and fanatics, who commonly impose their alliance, a heavy burden, on the reforming party in the state. He also hated all contented and self-sufficient dullards, who for the most part have to be supported, a grievous weight, by the party that stands for the established order. He makes war on both, with laughter that flashes and cuts".

2. Dryden's handling of allegory in 'Absalom and Achitophel'.

Satire rarely adopts direct attack. Allegory, fable, classical 'imitation', mock-heroic, parody and burlesque: the methods are many. Dryden couched the theme of his poem in the form of an allegory. Allegory was in common use in the seventeenth century. Dryden justifies the use of allegory in a political composition by pointing out Barclay's *Euphormio* as an example of Varronian satire. Barclay describes his purpose thus :

> "I will compile some stately Fable, in manner of a History... Then will I with the show of danger stir up pity, fear and horror : and by and by, cheer up all doubts and graciously allay the tempests... .. while they read, while they are affected with anger or favour, as it were against strangers, they shall meet with themselves ; and find in the glass held before them, the show and merit of their own fame. It will perchance make them ashamed longer to play those parts upon the stage of this life, for which they must confess themselves justly taxed in a fable".

This type of writing has set a fashion during the controversial days in France. Charles brought a taste for this species of writing from France. Dryden evidently looked into such French productions, as Ian Jack observes, in search of such hints that would help in the composition of lampoons and satires. The other pamphleteers also followed suit.

The analogy between Jewish in the reign of David and the condition of England in 1681 has given Dryden the incentive to employ the form of allegory. The parallel between David and Absalom and Charles II and Monmouth had already been exploited by other writers before Dryden took it up. Professor Richard F. Jones has shown that the parallel was in common use in the seventeenth century ; and was more closely applied when Monmouth emerged

in 1680. This parallel has pointed out, "Dryden could write more freely than about Charles II and his victims could not take action against him without acknowledging the likeness of their portraits.

The selection of names is interesting. There are two main groups, the Davidean and the Old Testament non-Davidean. The Davidean group consists of David, Michael (*l.* 11), Absalom Amnon (39), Ishbosheth (58), Achitophel, Shimei (585), Bathsheba (710), Bazallai (817), Zadoc (864), (Adriel 877), Hushai (818) and Amiel (899). Of these only David, Michael, Absalom and Achitophel were essential to the story. The non-Davidean group consists of Pharaoh (281), Zimri (544), Balaam, Caleb, Oradab (574-5), Jonas (581), Corah (632), Agag, with Samuel and Saul (676-7), Issachar (738) and Jotham (882). There are two miscellaneous names, the non-Biblical Annabella (*l.* 34) and New Testament Stephen (643). There are also some general allusions as to Adam, Aaron, and Samson where no modern parallel is intended.

The most remarkable thing about *Absalom* and *Achitophel* is the way in which Dryden used the allegory. Dr. Ian Jack evaluates: "Although a contemporary subject must have had many attractions for a poet who shared Milton's desire for subject of unassailable truth, there were serious difficulties in the way of investing it with any degree of grandeur. As Davenant had pointed out in his discussion of the heroic poem, 'men' even of the best education, discover their eyes to be weak when they look upon the glory of virtue, which is great actions, and rather endure it at distance than near, being more apt to believe and love the renown of predecessors than of contemporaries, whose deeds, excelling theirs in their own sight, seem to upbraid them, and are not reverenced as examples of vertue, but envy'd as the favours of Fortune." Envy apart, the familiarity of the subject-matter was against the poet. As Verall remarked, such unavoidable words as *Parliament Jury*, *Writ*, *Committee* defy an elevated idiom; they would have reduced Dryden's poem to the mock-heroic level, precisely as *Flecknoe Ogleby*, and Shadwell

reduce *MacFlecknoe*. The Old Testament allegory helped Dryden to raise his poem to a dignified level without collapsing into bathos.

"The possibility of using an elevated style was not the only benefit conferred by the allegory. It also acted as the instrument of Dryden's brilliant wit, and helped to give the poems an air of objectivity more impressive than the direct exclamatoriness so common in political satire. Because it is misleadingly over-simplified, the action stands in relief and the fact that such figures as the King, the Tempter, and the Mob are so readily recognised, carries the action a step further from the realm of mere political wrangling in the direction of universal philosophical of poetic birth.''

3. Estimate of Dryden as Satirist.

The signal contribution made by Dryden to English poetry is that in the allegory which he took over and remodelled he found a powerful ally in the task of raising political satire to the level of high art. Dryden's command of his weapon accounts in part for the new temper which he introduced into English satire. He tells us that the nicest and most delicate touches consist in fine raillery. "How easy it is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave without using any of those opprobrious terms! To spare the grossness of the names, and to do the thing yet more severely; is to draw a full face, and to make the nose and cheeks stand out, and yet not to employ any depth of shadowing. This is the mystery of the noble trade, which yet no master can teach to his apprentice''.

For the first time in English poetry it was Dryden who gave to satire a strange epic importance. The idea of casting satire in the epic mould was suggested by the faint satire of Juvenal. Here is Achitophel address to Absalom:

Suspicious prince, at whose nativity
Some royal planet ruled the southern sky,
Thy longing country's darling and desire,
Their cloudy pillar and their guardian fire......

So goes on the speech. There are a number of passages reminiscent of the Miltonic epic grandeur and loftiness of speech. Expression, elocution, diction, were cardinal points with him. His power seems to have issued solely from his words. He had mastered the satirical kind of expression. He was capable of a sublime contempt and it was contempt that he knew perfectly how to put into metre. Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel exhibited for the first time the power, plasticity and compass of the heroic couplet.

Dryden's special contribution to satire was in the field of personal portraiture. His Achitophel and his Zimri have felicity and finish. Often he seemed to be saying the last word about a man where actually he said almost nothing or only latticed him over with antithesis. "In selecting his portrait gallery", as Humbert Wolge has pointed out, "he never pointed a type without individual significance, or an individual that was not hugely typical". Or as Saintsbury says, his figures are at once types and individuals. Zimri is at once Buckingham and the idle grand seigneur who plays at politics and learning, Achitophel at once Shaftesbury and the abstract intriguer, Shimei at once Bethel and the sectarian politician of all days.

One thing more, and a thing of the greatest importance has to be said about Dryden as a satirist. Dryden was a satirist who never abused his powers for personal ends. We have his personal satires like *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe* attacking Shaftesbury and Shadwell. We do well to remember at this juncture that he attacked them only after both had assailed him in the most virulent fashion. Even in the portrayal of the character of Zimri, no trace of personal grudge can be seen. For, as Saintsbury said, "The character of Zimri was not only perfectly true and just, but was also a fair literary tit for tat in return for the *Rehearsal* ; nor did Buckingham's foolish rejoinder provoke the poet to say another word''.

CHAPTER IX

DRYDEN AND THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

Absalom and Achitophel, writes Nichol Smith, is "one of the great national portrait galleries in English poetry, the richest that we have had since Chaucer wrote his Prologue". Dryden's main object in writing *Absalom and Achitophel* is not merely to attack the men who plotted against the King, but to present the whole constitutional position to the reader. Several considerations have weighed in his portrayal of character. Among them, the most important are the considerations of man's merit or guilt, the nature of Dryden's own relations with him and the degree of royal favour which he enjoyed. Naturally enough, the Royal party which we have termed earlier the Davidean group is eulogistically portrayed, while the King's enemies are represented in an unfavourable way.

Absalom (Monmouth) is drawn in picturesque terms :

Early in Foreign Fields he won Renown
With Kings and States allied to Israel's Crown :
In Peace the thoughts of war he could remove
And seem'd as he were only born for Love.

Absalom's 'good person' and the 'young Messiah' of the people in him is brought with meticulous care :

From East to West his glories he displays :
And like the Sun, the Promis'd land surveys.
Fame runs before him as the Morning Star
And shouts of joy salute him from afar.
Each house receives him as a Guardian God ;
And consecrates the place of his abode.

No character other than Absalom has received so much praise from Dryden.

Dryden is evidently considerate to the minor characters of the Royal party like Barzillai, Adriel, Amiel and others. He is seemly under personal obligations to them. As Dr. Ian observed, "Although they lack the tremendous power which has immortalised the hostile 'characters', these little portraits are skilfully done."

Dryden's artistic powers and craftsmanship are to be seen in the delineation of 'hostile' characters. This band is led by the 'arch-enemy of Public Peace' as he calls him. And that is Shaftesbury in the character of Achitophel. Achitophel is

> A name to all succeeding ages curst :
> For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
> Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
> Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
> In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace ;
> A fiery soul, which working out of its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay
> And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.

Shaftesbury is dubbed as "Hell's dire Agent", the Satan of the Plot. Parallels between the Achitophel's temptation of Absalom (Monmouth) and the Fall of Man, Charles II remaining as the representative deity, have been worked out.

Zimri (Duke of Buckingham) is portrayed very differently. While Achitophel is primarily individual and secondarily a representation of the general, the character of Zimri is cast in general rather than particular. As Dr. Ian Jack puts it, it is first of all a 'humorous character' of the Inconstant Man :

"A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome :
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long ;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon:
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking."

Speaking of the other 'hostile' characters, Dr. Ian Jack observes : "Serious scorn distinguishes the characters" of Shimei and Corah from that of Zimri, while in indirectness of approach involving some degree of humour marks them off even more clearly from the unsmiling arraignment of Achitophel. It is not because they are censured any less decidedly, but because commoners cannot be as dangerous to the nation as a nobleman, that there is a contemptuous humour in the lines devoted to Slings by Bethel and Titus Oates which is completely absent from the description of Shaftesbury. The 'character' of Shimei begins with explicit and emphatic opprobrium :

But he, though bad, is followed by a worse.
The wretch, who Heav'ns Annointed dar'd to curse.

The effect of irony which informs the whole portrait. however, modulates from pure scorn to scornful ridicule :

Shimei, whose youth did early Promise bring
Of Zeal to God, and Hatred to his King ;
Did Wisely from Expensive sins refrain,
And never broke the Sabbath, but for Gain ......
Chaste were his cellers ; and his shrieval Board
The Grossness of a city Feast abhorr'd :
His cooks with long disuse, their trade forgot ;
Cool was his kitchen, though his Brains were hot.

The portrait of Corah, that 'Monumental Brass', is a similar compound of direct name-calling and devastating irony :

Sunk were his Eyes, his Voice was harsh and loud,
Sure signs he neither Cholerick, nor Proud.

It is noteworthy that such irony as may be found in the 'hostile' characters of the poem is practically always directed at religious non-conformists, wherher Catholics or Sectarians''.

The most famous character, according to Dryden, is Zimri. In *Discourse af Satire* Dryden wrote ; "The character of Zimri in my *Absalom* is, in my opinion, worth the whole poem : it is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough ; and he, for whom it was intended, was too witty to resent it as an injury. If I had railed, I might have suffered for it justly ; but I managed my own work more happily, perhaps more dexterously". Professor Dobree feels that the most famous is that of Achitophel. Shaftesbury must always be the favourite, Dobree contends, as it contains more poetic power.

CHAPTER X

DRYDEN'S VERSIFICATION IN ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

The versification of English satire before Dryden had been almost without exception harsh and rugged. The predecessors of Dryden were at a disadvantage in so far as the languid cadence of their verse was unsuited for satire and they had not the art of quickening varying it. But Dryden was in no such case. As Prof. Saintsbury has noted, "His native gifts and his enormous practice in play-writing had made the couplet as natural a vehicle to him for any form of discourse as blank verse or as plain prose".

1. Dryden's Verse.

Dryden had a conviction that a poet's best powers should go into the perfecting of his verse instrument. Believing always that 'versification and numbers are the greatest pleasures of poetry', he tended to cherish heroic verse as a musical instrument, and to work for harmony and rhythm alone. His desire was always for 'even, sweet, and flowing' lines. Dryden describes :

> A fiery soul, which working out its way
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay.

It is for this sheer poetic power that Professor considers Achitophel as the most famous character-sketch in Dryden's portrait gallery.

Dryden has a fondness for latinistic polysyllables. This fondness for polysyllables arose from the capacity which they seemed to have, as Dryden said, for "softening our

uncouth humbers", for supplying the heroic line, and imparting to it an undulating grace. Notice the following lines on Corah (Titus Oates):

> Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass;
> Erect thyself, thou monumental brass,
> High as the serpent of thy metal made,
> While nations stand secure beneath thy shade.

With what majesty the lines move! It has something of the Miltonic grandeur which is one of the devices which Dryden makes to invest his poem with epic qualities. Dryden too has adopted the Miltonic inversions. Achitophel's second speech begins:

> 'Him staggering so when Hell's dire agent found'.

It is very reminiscent of those lines of *Paradise Lost* where the Almighty hurls Satan down into sulphurous vapours. Such Miltonic inversions are many in Dryden, for, as Mark Van Doren said, "Dryden was peculiarly fitted to lead the rhetorical grand march in English poetry". Van Doren goes on, "He was inclined to fall into an exalted antithetical tone of formal address. This tone was of enormous advantage in *Absalom* where it erected great public personages to their proper height and gave to satire a strange epic importance".

Dryden said, "the chief secret in the choice of words; and, by this choice, I do not here mean elegancy of expression, but propriety of sound, to be varied according to the nature of the subject". Dryden speaks with his most communicative cadences in the satire. These two utterly contemptuous lines from *Absalom,*

> "A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed,
> Of the true old enthusiastic breed",

are perfectly turned; the vowels and the consonants are steeped in disdain. Wordsorth found in him 'a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind' and 'an excellent ear'.

2. Dryden's handling of the heroic couplet in 'Absalom and Achitophel'.

The greatness of Dryden lies in adapting the heroic couplet to suit his mind. This adaptation involved many characteristics : (i) end-stop ; (ii) a conformation of the sentence-structure to the metrical pattern ; a tendency towards the polysyllables within the lines ; (iv) a tendency towards emphatic words at the ends of lines, and (v) a frequent use of balance with pronounced caesura.

The end-stop and the modification of sentence-structure to suit the length of measure, made for *Pointedness* if not for brevity and provided in the couplet a ratiocinative unit which served admirably as the basis for decorative or argumentative poems. Zimri (the Duke of Buckingham)

> "Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
> Was everything by starts and nothing long ;
> But in the course of one revolving moon
> Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon".

The polysyllables made for speed and flexibility, and encouraged a latinized, abstract vocabulary. Shaftesbury in his second speech suggests the next heir, James, is merely biding his time to crush Monmouth :

> "And like a lion, slumbering in the way
> Or sleep dissembling, while he waits his prey,
> His fearless foes within the distance draws,
> Constrains his roaring and contracts his paws,
> Till at the last, his time for fury found,
> He shoots with sudden vengeance from the ground,
> The prostrate vulgar passes o'er and spares,
> But with a lordly rage his hunters tears".

This is an epic simile again reminiscent of Milton.

Dryden insists upon important words for the closing of lines which meant that the sense was not likely to trail off or be left hanging :

'A name to all succeeding ages curst......'
'That every man with him was God or Devil... ...'
'Cool was his kitchen, though his brains were hot...'

There are scores of them teeming in *Absalom and Achitophel.*

Dryden's use of balance promoted the air of finality. He is the master of the stiff bisected line when he cares to use it :

"Nothing to build
  And all things to destroy......
Who thinks too little,
  And who talks too much......"

Dryden had a gift for adapting his rhythmical emphasis to his meaning. Alliteration, effective rhyme, antithesis and the use of polysyllables were only auxiliaries to that. It was that which gave him rapidity without the appearance of haste, and flexibility without the loss of strength. Alliterative was instinctive with him. It assists both sound and sense. In satire alliteration is either corrosive in its contemptuousness :

'In friendship false, implacable in hate,
Resolved to ruin, or to rule the state;'

or simply derisive and pelting :

'And popularly prosecutes the plot.'

Dryden's achievement was to make the heroic couplet a strong yet light vehicle for miscellaneous loads, a medium for the poetry of statement.

3. Dryden's use of metre in 'Absalom and Achitophel'.

Dryden's style is unfailingly fresh. He brought new cadences, new tunes. Within the bounds imposed by rhyme he obtained a surprising diversity of accent. Pope recognised three places within the heroic line where pauses might

come: after the fourth, fifth and sixth syllables. Dryden knew no limits of the kind. His pauses come anywhere; any often they do not come at all—

> 'To the next headlong steep of anarchy';
> 'But baffled by an arbitrary kind.'

Dryden kept himself free to distribute his emphasis where the sense demanded it. The result was a speaking voice. Thus—

> "Others though kings an useless heavy load,
> Who cost too much, and did too little good;
> They were for laying honest David by,
> Our principles of pure good husbandry."

In his triplets, Dryden sometimes had Alexandrines or fourteeners, as they are called. These are at times unconscious echoes of the French heroic lines. At other times, they contributed a flourish of burlesque grandeur. Elsewhere they were calculated to yield an effect of splendour. The triplet supplies the colloquial first-hand note. The third line of a triplet in Dryden frequently represents lowering of the voice to the level of parenthesis or innuendo as in

> "He is not now, as when, on Jordan's sand
> The joyful people thronged to see him land,
> Covering the beach and blackening all the strand."

Triplets closing with Alexandrines frequently succeed in imparting a compendiousness to compliment.

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

A POEM.

"Si propius stes
Te capiat magis."

HORACE, *Ars Poet.* 361.

TO THE READER.

'Tis not my intention to make an apology for my poem: some will think it needs no excuse, and others will receive none. The design, I am sure, is honest ; but he who draws his pen for one party must expect to make enemies of the other. For wit and fool are consequents of Whig and Troy: and every man is a knave or an ass to the contrary side. There's a treasury of merits in the Fanatic church as well as in the Papist, and a pennyworth to be had of saintship, honesty, and poetry, for the lewd, the factious, and the blockheads ; but the longest chapter in Deuteronomy has not curses enough for an Anti-Bromingham. My comfort is, their manifest prejudice to my cause will render their judgment of less authority against me. Yet if a poem has a genius, it will force its own reception in the world ; for there is a sweetness in good verse, which tickles even while it hurts ; and no man can be heartily angry with him who pleases him against his will. The commendation of adversaries is the greatest triumph of a writer, because it never comes unless extorted. But I can be satisfied on more easy terms: if I happen to please the more moderate sort, I shall be sure

of an honest party and, in all probability, of the best judges; for the least concerned are commonly the least corrupt. And I confess I have laid in for those, by rebating the satire, where justice would allow it, from carrying too sharp an edge. They who can criticize so weakly as to imagine I have done my worst, may be convinced at their own cost that I can write severely with more ease than I can gently. I have but laughed at some man's follies, when I could have declaimed against their vices; and other men's virtues I have commended as freely as I have taxed their crimes. And now, if you are a malicious reader, I expect you should return upon me that I affect to be thought more impartial than I am; but if men are not to be judged by their professions, God forgive you commonwealth's-men for professing so plausibly for the government. You cannot be so unconscionable as to charge me for not subscribing of my name; for that would reflect too grossly upon your own party, who never dare, though they have the advantage of a jury to secure them. If you like not my poem, the fault may possible be in my writing, though 'tis hard for an author to judge against himself: but more probably 'tis in your morals, which cannot bear the truth of it. The violent on both sides will condemn the character of Absalom, as either too favourably or too hardly drawn; but they are not the violent when I desire to please. The fault on the right hand is to extenuate, palliate, and indulge; and, to confess freely, I have endeavoured to commit it. Besides the respect which I owe his birth, I have a greater for his heroic virtues; and David himself could not be more tender of the young man's life, than I would be of his reputation. But since the most excellent natures are always the most easy and, as being such, are the soonest perverted by ill counsels, especially when baited with fame and glory, it is no more a wonder that he withstood not the temptations of Achitophel than it was for Adam not to have resisted the two devils, the serpent and the woman. The conclusion of the story I purposely forebore to prosecute, because I could not obtain from myself to show Absalom unfortunate. The frame of it was cut out for a picture

to the waist; and if the draught be so far true, it is as much I designed.

Were I the inventor, who am only the historian, I should certainly conclude the piece with the reconcilement of Absalom to David. And who knows but this may come to pass? Things were not brought to an extremity where I left the story: there seems yet to be room left for a composure; hereafter there may only be for pity. I have not so much as an uncharitable wish against Achitophel, but am content to be accused of a good natured error, and to hope with Origen, that the Devil himself may at last be saved. For which reason, in this poem, he is neither brought to set his house in order, nor to dispose off his person afterwards as he in wisdom shall think fit. God is infinitely merciful; and his vicegerent is only not so, because he is not infinite.

The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction. And he who writes honestly is no more an enemy to the offender than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease; for those are only in order to prevent the chirurgeon's work of an *Ense rescindendum*, which I wish not to my very enemies. To conclude all; if the body politic have any analogy to the natural, in my weak judgment, an act of oblivion were as necessary in a hot distempered state as an opiate would be in a raging fever.

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL.

THE FIRST PART

IN pious times, ere priestcra't did begin,
Before polygamy was made a sin,
When man on many multiplied his kind,
Ere one to one was cursedly confined,.........
Then Israel's monarch after Heaven's own heart
His vigorous warmth did variously impart
To wives and slaves, and, wide as his command,
Scattered his Maker's image through the land.
Michal, of royal blood, the crown did wear,
A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care:
Not so the rest : for several mothers
To god-like David several sons before.
But since like slaves his bed they did ascend,
No true succession could their seed attend.'
Of all this numerous progeny was none
So beautiful, so brave, as Absalom :........
For that his conscious destiny made way
By manly beauty to imperia away.
Early in foreign fields he won renown
With kings and states allied to Israel's crown ;
In peace the thoughts of war he could remove
And seemed as he were only born for love.
Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,
In his alone 'twas natural to please ;
His motions all accompanied with grace,
And Paradise was opend in his face.
With secret joy indulgent David viewed
His youthful image in his son renewed ;
To all his wishes nothing he denied
And made the charming Annabel his bride.

What faults he had (for who from faults is free ?)
His father could not or he would not see.
Some warm excesses, which the law forbore,
Were construed youth that purged by boiling o'er ;
And Amnon's murder by a specious name
Was called a just revenge for injured fame.
Thus praised and loved, the noble youth remained,
While David undisturbed in Sion reigned.
But life can never be sincerely blest ;
Heaven punishes the bad, and proves the best.
The Jews, a headstrong, moody, murmuring race
As ever tried the extent and stretch of grace ;
God's pampered people, whom, debauched with ease
No king could govern nor no God could please ;
Gods they had tried of every shape and size
That godsmiths could produce or priests devise ;
These Adam-wits, too fortunately free,
Began to dream they wanted liberty ;
And when no rule, no precedent was found
Of men by laws less circumscribed and bound,
They led their wild desires to woods and caves
And thought that all but savages were slaves.
They who, when Saul was dead, without a blow
Made foolish Ishbosheth the crown forego ;
Who banished David did from Hebron bring,
And with a general shout proclaimed him King ;
Those very Jews who at their very best
    humour more than loyalty exprest,
Now wondered why so long they had obeyed
An idol monarch which their hands had made :
Thought they might ruin him they could create
Or melt him to that golden calf, a State.
But these were random bolts ; no formed design
Nor interest made the factious crowd to join :
The sober part of Israel, free from stain,
Well knew the value of a peaceful reign ;
And looking backward with a wise affright
Saw seams of wounds dishonest to the sight,
In contemplation of whose ugly scars
They cursed the memory of civil wars.

The moderate sort of men, thus qualified,
Inclined the balance to the better side;
And David's mildness managed it so well,
The bad found no occasion to rebel.
But when to sin our biassed nature leans,
The careful Devil is still at hand with means
And providently pimps for ill desires:
The good old cause, revived, a plot requires,
Plots true or false are necessary things,
To raise up commonwealths and ruin kings.

The inhabitants of old Jerusalem
Were Jebusites; the town so called from them,
And theirs the native right.
But when the chosen people grew more strong,
The rightful cause at length became the wrong;
And every loss the men of Jebus bore,
They still were thought God's enemies the more.
Thus worn and weakened, well or ill content,
Submit they must to David's government:
Impoverished and deprived of all command,
Their taxes doubled as they lost their land;
And, what was harder yet to flesh and blood,
Their gods disgraced, and burnt like common wood.
This set the heathen priesthood in a flame,
For priests of all religions are the same.
Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be,
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,
In his defence his servants are as bold,
As if he had been born of beaten gold.
The Jewish Rabbins though their enemies,
In this conclude them honest men, and wise:
For 'twas their duty, all the learned think,
To espouse his cause by whom they eat and drink.
From hence began that Plot, the nation's curse,
Bad in itself, but represented worse,
Raised in extremes, and in extremes decried,
With oaths affirmed, with dying vows denied,
Not weighed or winnowed by the multitude,
But swallowed in the mass, unchewed and crude.

Some truth there was, but dashed and brewed with lies
To please the fools and puzzle all the wise :
Succeeding times did equal folly call
Believing nothing or believing all.
The Egyptian rites the Jebusites embraced,
Where gods were recommended by their taste ;
Such savoury deities must needs be good
As served at once for worship and for food,
By force they could not introduce these gods,
For ten to one in former days was odds :
So fraud was used, the sacrificer's trade ;
Tools are more hard to conquer than persuade.
Their busy teachers mingled with the Jews
And raked for converts even the court and stews :
Which Hebrew priests the more unkindly took,
Because the fleece accompanies the flock.
Some thought they God's anointed meant to slay
By guns, invented since full many a day :
Our author swears it not ; but who can know
How far the Devil and Jebusites may go ?
This plot, which failed for want of common sense,
Had yet a deep and dangerous consequence :
For as, when raging fevers boil the blood,
The standing lake soon floats into a flood,
And every hostile humour which before
Slept quiet in its channels bubbles o'er ;
So several factions from this first ferment
Work up to foam and threat the government.
Some by their friends, more by themselves thought wise,
Opposed the power to which they could not rise.
Some had in courts been great and, thrown from thence,
Like fiends were hardened in impenitence.
Some by their Monarch's fatal mercy grown
From pardoned rebels kinsmen to the throne
Were raised in power and public office high ;
Strong bands, if bands ungrateful men could tie.
Of these the false Achitophel was first,
A name to all succeeding ages curst ;
For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,

Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity,
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
Punish a body which he could not please,
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
And all to leave what with his toil he won
To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,
Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
In friendship false, implacable in hate,
Resolved to ruin or to rule the state;
To compass this the triple bond he broke,
The pillars of the public safety shook,
And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke;
Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.
So easy still it proves in factious times
With public zeal to cancel private crimes.
How safe is treason and how sacred ill,
Where none can sin against the people's will,
Where crowds can wink and no offence be known,
Since in another's guilt they find their own!
Yet fame deserved no enemy can grudge;
The statesman we abhor, but praise the judge.
In Isarel's courts ne'er sat an Abbethdin
With more discerning eyes or hands more clean,
Unbribed, unsought, the wretched to redress,
Swift of despatch and easy of access.
Oh! had he been content to serve the crown
With virtues only proper to the gown,

Or had the rankness of the soil been freed
From cockle that oppressed the noble seed,
David for him his tuneful harp had strung
And Heaven had wanted one immortal song.
But wild ambition loves to slide, not stand,
And Fortune's ice prefers to Virtue's land.
Achitophel, grown weary to possess
A lawful fame and lazy happiness,
Disdained the golden fruit to gather free
And lent the crowd his arm to shake the tree.
Now, manifest of crimes contrived long since,
He stood at bold defiance with his Prince,
Held up the buckler of the people's cause
Against the crown, and skulked behind the laws.
The wished occasion of the plot he takes ;
Some circumstances finds, but more he makes ;
By buzzing emissaries fills the ears
Of listening crowds with jealousies and fears
Of arbitrary counsels brought to light,
And proves the King himself a Jebusite.
Weak arguments ! which yet he knew full well
Were strong with people easy to rebel.
For governed by the moon, the giddy Jews
Tread the same track when she the prime renews :
And once in twenty years their scribes record,
By natural instinct they change their lord.
Achitophel still wants a chief, and none
Was found so fit as warlike Absalom.
Not that he wished his greatness to create,
For politicians neither love nor hate :
But, for he knew his title not allowed
Would keep him still depending on the crowd,
That kingly power, thus ebbing out, might be
Drawn to the democracy.
Him he attempts with studied arts to please
And sheds his venom in such words as these :

"Auspicious prince, at whose nativity
"Some royal planet ruled the southern sky,
"Thy longing country's darling and desire,
"Their cloudly pillar and their guardian fire,

"Their second Moses, whose extended wand
"Divides the seas and shows the promised land,
"Whose dawning day in every distant age
"Has exercised the sacred prophet's rage,
"The people's prayer, the glad diviner's theme,
"The young men's vision, and the old men's dream,
"Thee Saviour, thee the nation's vows confess,
"And never satisfied with seeing bless:
"Swift unbespoken pomps thy steps proclaim,
"And stammering babes are taught to lisp thy name.
"How long wilt thou the general joy detain,
"Starve and defraud the people of thy reign?
"Content ingloriously to pass thy days,
"Like one of virtue's fools that feed on praise;
"Till thy fresh glories, which now shine so bright,
"Grow stale and tarnish with our daily sight.
"Believe me, royal youth, thy fruit must be
"Or gathered ripe, or rot upon the tree.
"Heaven has to all allotted, soon or late,
"Some lucky revolution of their fate:
"Whose motions if we watch and guide with skill,
"(For human good depends on human will,)
"Our fortune rolls as from a smooth descent
"And from the first impression takes the bent;
"But, if unseized, she glides away like wind
"And leaves repenting folly far behind.
"Now, now she meets you with a glorious prize
"And spreads her locks before her as she flies.
"Had thus old David, from whose loins you spring,
"Not dared, when Fortune called him to be King,
"At Gath an exile he might still remain,
"And Heaven's anointing oil had been in vain.
"Let his successful youth your hopes engage,
"But shun the example of declining age.
"Behold him setting in his western skies,
"The shadows lengthening as the vapours rise;
"He is not now, as when, on Jordan's sand,
"The joyful people thronged to see him land,
"Covering the beach and blackening all the strand,
"But like the Prince of Angels, from his height

"Comes tumbling downward with diminished light :
"Betrayed by one poor plot to public scorn,
"(Our only blessing since his curst return,)
"Those heaps of people, which one sheaf did bind,
"Blow, off and scattered by a puff of wind.
"What strength can he to your designs oppose,
"Naked of friends, and round beset with foes ?
"If Pharaoh's doubtful succour he should use,
"A foreign aid would more incense the Jews ;
"Proud Egypt would dissembled friendship bring,
"Foment the war, but not support the King :
"Nor would the royal party e'er unite
"With Pharaoh's arms to assist the Jebusite ;
"Or, if they should, their interest soon would break
"And with such odious aid make David weak.
"All sorts of men, by my successful arts
"Abhorring kings estrange their altered hearts
"From David's rule : and 'tis the general cry,
"Religion, commonwealth, and liberty.
"If you, as champion of the public good,
"Add to their arms a chief of royal blood,
"What may not Israel hope, and what applause
"Might such a general gain by such a cause ?
"Not barren praise alone, that gaudy flower,
"Fair only to the sight, but solid power ;
"And nobler is a limited command,
"Given by the love of all your native land,
"Than a successive title, long and dark,
"Drawn from the mouldy rolls of Noah's ark."

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds,
When flattery soothes and when ambition blinds ?
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed ;
Yet sprung from high is of celestial seed ;
In God 'tis glory, and when men aspire,
'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire.
The ambitious youth, too covetous of fame,
Too full of angel's metal in his frame,
Unwarily was led from virtue's ways.
Made drunk with honour and debauched with praise.
Half loth and half consenting to the ill,

For loyal blood within him struggled still,
He thus replied : "And what pretence have I
"To take up arms for public liberty?
"My father governs with unquestioned right,
"The faith's defender and mankind's delight,
"God, gracious, just, observant of the laws ;
"And Heaven by wonders has espoused his cause.
"Whom has he wronged in all his peaceful reign ?
"Who sues for justice to his throne in vain ?
"What millions has he pardoned of his foes
"Whom just revenge did to his wrath expose.
"Mild, easy, humble, studious of our good,
"Inclined to mercy and averse from blood.
"If mildness ill with stubborn Israel suit,
"His crime is God's beloved attribute.
"What could he gain his people to betray
"Or change his right for arbitrary sway ?
"Let haughty Pharaoh curse with such a reign
"His fruitful Nile, and yoke a servile train.
"If David's rule Jerusalem displease,
"The dog-star heats their brains to this disease,
"Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
"Turn rebel and run popularly mad ?
"Were he a tyrant, who by lawless might
"Oppressed the Jews and raised the Jebusite.
"Well might I mourn : but nature's holy bands
"Would curb my spirits and restrain my hands ;
"The people might assert their liberty,
"But what was right in them were crime in me.
"His favour leaves me nothing to require,
"Prevents my wishes and outruns desire ;
"What more can I expect while David lives ?
"All but his kingly diadem he gives :
"And that"—But there he paused, then sighing said,
"Is justly destined for a worthier head ;
"For when my father from his toils shall rest
"And late augment the number of the blest,
"His lawful issue shall the throne ascend,
"Or the collateral line, where that shall end.
"His brother, though oppressed with vulgar spite,

"Yet dauntless and secure of native right,
"Of every royal virtue stands possest,
"Still dear to all the bravest and the best.
"His courage foes, his friend his truth proclaim,
"His loyalty the King, the world his fame.
"His mercy even the offending crowd will find,
"For sure he comes of a forgiving kind.
"Why should I then repine at Heaven's decree
"Which gives me no pretence to royalty ?
"Yet oh that Fate, propitiously inclined,
"Had raised my birth or had debased my mind,
"To my large soul not all her treasure lent,
"And then betrayed it to a mean descent !
"I find, I find my mounting spirits bold,
"And David's part disdains my mother's mould.
"Why am I scanted by a niggard birth ?
"My soul disclaims the kindred of her earth.
"And, made for empire, whispers me within.
"Desire of greatness is a god-like sin."

Him staggering so when Hell's dire agent found,
While fainting virtue scarce maintained her ground,
He pours fresh forces in, and thus replies ;
"The eternal God, supremely good and wise,
"Imparts not these prodigious gifts in vain.
"What wonders are reserved to bless your reign !
"Against your will your arguments have shown,
"Such virtue's only given to guide a throne.
"Not that your father's mildness I contemn,
"But manly force becomes the diadem.
"'Tis true he grants the people all the crave,
"And more perhaps than subjects ought to have :
"For lavish grants suppose a monarch tame
"And more his goodness than his wit proclaim.
"But when should people strive their bonds to break,
"If not when kings are negligent or weak ?
"Let him give on till he can give no more,
"The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor ;
"And every shekel which he can receive
"Shall cost a limb of his prerogative.

"To ply him with new plots shall be my care,
"Or plunge him deep in some expensive war;
"Which when his treasure can no more supply,
"He must with the remains of kingship buy.
"His faithful friends our jealousies and fears
"Call Jebusites and Pharaoh's pensioners,
"Whom when our fury from his aid has torn,
"He shall be naked left to public scorn.
"The next successor, whom I fear and hate,
"My arts have made obnoxious to the State,
"Turned all his virtues to his overthrow,
"And gained our elders to pronounce a foe.
"His right for sums of necessary gold
"Shall first be pawned, and afterwards be sold;
"Till time shall ever-wanting David draw
"To pass your doubtful title into law.
"If not, the people have a right supreme
"To make their kings, for kings are made for them.
"All empire is no more than power in trust,
"Which, when resumed, can be no longer just.
"Succession, for the general good designed,
"In its own wrong a nation cannot bind:
"If altering that the people can relieve,
"Better one suffer than a nation grieve.
"The Jews well know their power: ere Saul they chose
"God was their King, and God they durst depose.
"Urge now your piety, your filial name,
"A father's right and fear of future fame,
"The public good, that universal call,
"To which even Heaven submitted, answers all.
"Nor let his love enchant your generous mind;
"'Tis Nature's trick to progagate her kind.
"Our fond begetters, who would never die,
"Love but themselves in their posterity.
"Or let his kindness by the effects be tried
"Or let him lay his vain pretence aside.
"God said, He loved your father; could He bring
"A better proof than to anoint him King?
"It surely showed, He loved the shepherd well
"Who gave so fair a flock as Israel.

"Would David have you thought his darling son ?
"What means he then to alienate the crown ?
"The name of godly he may blush to bear ;
"'Tis after God's own heart to cheat his heir.
"He to his brother gives supreme command,
"To you a lagacy of barren land,
"Perhaps the old harp on which he thrums his lays
"Or some dull Hebrew ballad in your praise.
"Then the next heir, a prince severe and wise,
"Already looks on you with jealous eyes,
"Sees through the thin disguises of your arts,
"And marks your progress in the people's hearts ;
"Though now his mighty soul its grief contains,
"He meditates revenge who least complains ;
"And like a lion, slumbering in the way
"Or sleep dissembling, while he waits his prey,
"His fearless foes within his distance draws,
"Constrains his roaring and contracts his paws,
"Till at the last, his time for fury found,
"He shoots with sudden vengeance from the ground,
"The prostrate vulgar passes o'er and spares,
"But with a lordly rage his hunters tears ;
"Your case no tame expedients will afford,
"Resolve on death or conquest by the sword,
"Which for no less a stake than life you draw,
"And self-defence is Nature's eldest law.
"Leave the warm people no considering time,
"For then rebellion may be thought a crime.
"Prevail yourself of what occasion gives,
"But try your title while your father lives ;
"And, that your arms may have a fair pretence,
"Proclaim you take them in the King's defence ;
"Whose sacred life each minute would expose
"To plots from seeming friends and secret foes.
"And who can sound the depth of David's soul ?
"Perhaps his fear his kindness may control :
"He fears his brother, though he loves his son,
"For plighted vows too late to be undone......
"Doubt not : but, when he most affects the frown,
"Commit a pleasing rape upon the crown.

"Secure his person to secure your cause :
"They, who possess the Prince, possess the laws"

He said, and this advice above the rest
With Absalom's mild nature suited best ;
Unblamed of life (ambition set aside),
Not stained with cruelty nor puffed with pride,
How happy had he been, if Destiny
Had higher placed his birth or not so high !
His kingly virtues might have claimed a throne
And blessed all other countries but his own ;
But charming greatness since so few refuse,
'Tis juster to lament him than accuse.
Strong were his hopes a rival to remove,
With blandishments to gain the public love,
To head the faction while their zeal was hot,
And popularly prosecute the plot,
To further this, Achitophel unites
The malcontents of all the Israelites,
Whose differing parties he could wisely join
For several ends to serve the same design ;
The best, (and of the princes some were such,)
Who thought the power of monarchy too much ;
Mistaken men and patriots in their hearts,
Not wicked, but seduced by impious arts ;
By these the springs of property were bent
And wound so high they cracked the government.
The next for interest sought to embroil the state
To sell their duty at a dearer rate,
And make their Jewish markets of the throne ;
Pretending public good to serve their own.
Others thought kings an useless heavy load,
Who cost too much and did too little good.
These were for laying honest David by
On principles of pure good husbandry.
With them joined all the haranguers of the throng.
That thought to get preferment by the tongue.
Who follow next a double danger bring,
Not only hating David, but the King ;
The Solymaean rout, well versed of old

In godly faction and in treason bold,
Cowering and quaking at a conqueror's sword,
But lofty to a lawful prince restored,
Saw with disdain and Ethnic plot begun
And scorned by Jebusites to be outdone.
Hot Levites headed these ; who pulled before
From the ark, which in the Judges' days they bore,
Resumed there cant, and with a zealous cry
Pursued their old beloved theocracy,
Where Sanhedrin and priest enslaved the nation
And justified their spoils by inspiration ;
For who so fit for reign as Aaron's race,
If once dominion they could found in grace ?
These led the pack ; though not of surest scent,
Yet deepest mouthed against the government.
A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed
Of the true old enthusiastic breed :
'Gainst form and order they their power employ,
Nothing to build and all things to destroy.
But far more numerous was the herd of such
Who think too little and who talk too much.
These out of mere instinct, they knew not why,
Adored their father's God and property,
And by the same blind benefit of Fate
The Devil and the Jebusite did hate :
Born to be saved even in their own despite,
Because they could not help believing right.
Such were the tools ; but a whole hydra more
Remains of sprouting heads too long to score.
Some of their chiefs were princes of the land ;
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome :
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long ;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon :
Then all for women, painting, rhyming drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes :
So over violent or over civil
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art ;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laughed himself from Court ; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief :
For spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel ;
Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left.

Titles and names 'twere tedious to rehearse
Of lords below the dignity of verse.
Wits, warriors, commonwealth's-men were the best :
Kind husbands and mere nobles all the rest.
And therefore in the name of dulness be
The well-hung Balaam and cold Caleb free ;
And canting Nadab let oblivion damn
Who made new porridge for the paschal lamb.
Let friendship's holy band some names assure,
Some their own worth, and some let scorn secure.
Nor shall the rascal rabble here have place
Whom kings no titles gave, and God no grace :
Not bull-faced Jonas, who could statutes draw
To mean rebellion and make treason law.
But he, though bad, is followed by a worse,
The wretch who Heaven's anointed dared to curse ;
Shimei, whose youth did early promise bring
Of zeal to God and hatred to his King,
Did wisely from expensive sins refrain
And never broke the Sabbath but for gain :
Nor ever was he known an oath to vent
Or curse, unless against the Government.
Thus heaping wealth by the most ready way

Among the Jews, which was to cheat and pray,
The City, to reward his pious hate
Against his master, chose him magistrate.
His hand a vare of justice did uphold,
His neck was loaded with a chain of gold.
During his office treason was no crime,
The sons of Belial had a glorious time;
For Shimei, though not prodigal of pelf,
Yet loved his wicked neighbour as himself,
When two or three were gathered to declaim
Against the monarch of Jerusalem,
Shimei was always in the midst of them:
And, if they cursed the King when he was by,
Would rather curse than break good company.
If any durst his factious friends accuse,
He packed a jury of dissenting Jews;
Whose follow-feeling in the godly cause
Would free the suffering saint from human laws:
For laws are only made to punish those
Who serve the King, and to protect his foes.
If any leisure time he had from power,
Because 'tis sin to misemploy an hour,
His business was by writing to persuade
That kings were useless and a clog to trade:
And that his noble style he might refine,
No Rechabite more shunned the fumes of wine.
Chaste were his cellars, and his shrieval board
The grossness of a city feast abhorred:
His cooks with long disuse their trade forgot;
Cool was his kitchen, though his brains were hot,
Such frugal virtue malice may accuse,
But sure 'twas necessary to the Jews:
For towns once burnt such magistrates require
As dare not tempt God's providence by fire.
With spiritual food he fed his servants well,
But free from flesh that made the Jews rebel:
And Moses' laws he held in more account
For forty days of fasting in the mount.
To speak the rest, who better are forgot,
Would tire a well-breathed witness of the plot.

Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass ;
Erect thyself, thou monumental brass,
High as the serpent of thy metal made,
While nations stand secure beneath thy shade.
What though his birth were base, yet comets rise
From earthly vapours, ere they shine in skies.
Prodigious actions may as well be done
By weaver's issue as by prince's son.
This arch-attester for the public good
By that one deed ennobles all his blood.
Who ever asked the witnesses' high race
Whose oath with martyrdom did Stephen grace ?
Ours was a Levite, and as times went then,
His tribe were God Almighty's gentlemen.
Sunk were his eyes, his voice was harsh and loud,
Sure signs he neither choleric was nor proud ;
His long chin proved his wit, his saint-like grace
A church vermilion and a Moses' face.
His memory, miraculously great,
Could plots exceeding man's belief repeat ;
Which therefore cannot be accounted lies.
For human wit could never such devise.
Some future truths are mingled in his book,
But where the witness failed, the prophet spoke.
Some things like visionary flights appear ;
The spirit caught him up, the Lord knows where ;
And gave him his Rabbinical degree
Unknown to foreign University,
His judgment yet his memory did excel,
Which pieced his wondrous evidence so well
And suited to the temper of the times,
Then groaning under Jebusitic crimes,
Let Israel's foes suspect his heavenly call
And rashly judge his writ apocryphal ;
Our laws for such affronts have forfeits made,
He takes his life who takes away his trade.
Were I myself in witness Corah's place,
The wretch who did me such a dire disgrace
Should whet my memory, though once forgot,
To makes him an appendix of my plot.

His zeal to Heaven made him his Prince despise,
And load his person with indignities.
But zeal peculiar privilege affords,
Indulging latitude to deeds and words :
And Corah might for Agag's murder call,
In terms as coarse as Samuel used to Saul.
What others in his evidence did join,
The best that could be had for love or coin,
In Corah's own predicament will fall,
For witness is a common name to all.

Surrounded thus with friends of every sort,
Deluded Absalom forsakes the court ;
Impatient of high hopes, urged renown,
And fired with near possession of a crown.
The admiring crowd are dazzled with surprise
And on his goodly person feed their eyes.
His joy concealed, he sets himself to show,
On each side bowing popularly low,
His looks, his gestures, and his words he frames
And with familiar ease repeats their names.
Thus formed by nature, furnished out with arts,
He glides unfelt into their secret hearts.
Then with a kind compassionating look,
And sighs, bespeaking pity ere he spoke,
Few words he said, but easy those and fit,
More slow than Hybla-drops and far more sweet :

"I mourn, my countrymen, your lost estate,
"Though far unable to prevent your fate :
"Behold a banished man, for your dear cause
"Exposed a prey to arbitrary laws !
"Yet oh that I alone could be undone,
"Cut off from empire, and no more a son !
"Now all your liberties a spoil are made,
"Egypt and Tyrus intercept your trade,
"And Jebusites your sacred rites invade.
"My father, whom with reverence yet I name,
"Charmed into ease, is careless of his fame
"And, bribed with petty sums of foreign gold,
"Is grown in Bathsheba's embraces old ;

"Exalts his enemies, his friends destroys,
"And all his power against himself employs.
"He gives, and let him give, my right away;
"But why should he his own and yours betray?
"He, only he can make the nation bleed,
"And he alone from my revenge is freed.
"Take then my tears (with that he wiped his eyes),
"'Tis all the aid my present power supplies:
"No court-informer can these arms accuse;
"These arms may sons against their fathers use.
"And 'tis my wish, the next successor's reign
"May make no other Israelite complain."

Youth, beauty, graceful action seldom fail,
But common interest always will prevail;
And pity never ceases to be shown
To him who makes the people's wrongs his own.
The crowd that still believe their kings oppress
With lifted hands their young Messiah bless:
Who now begins his progress to ordain
With chariots, horsemen, and a numerous train;
From east to west his glories he displays
And, like the sun, the promised land surveys.
Fame runs before him as the morning star,
And shouts of joy salute him from afar;
Each house receives him as a guardian god
And consecrates the place of his abode.
But hospitable treats did most commend
Wise Issachar, his wealthy western friend.
This moving court that caught the people's eyes,
And seemed but pomp, did other ends disguise;
Achitophel had formed it, with intent
To sound the depths and fathom, where it went,
The people's hearts, distinguish friends from foes,
And try their strength before they came to blows.
Yet all was coloured with a smooth pretence
Of specious love and duty to their prince.
Religion and redress of grievances,
Two names that always cheat and always please,
Are often urged; and good King David's life

Endangered by a brother and a wife.
Thus in a pageant show a plot is made,
And peace itself is war in masquerade.
Oh foolish Israel ! never warned by ill !
Still the same bait, and circumvented still !
Did ever men forsake their present ease,
In midst of health imagine a disease,
Take pains contingent mischiefs to foresee,
Make heirs for monarchs, and for God decree ?
What shall we think ? Can people give away
Both for themselves and sons their native sway ?
Then they are left defenceless to the sword
Of each unbounded, arbitrary lord ;
And laws are vain by which we right enjoy,
If Kings unquestioned can those laws destroy.
Yet if the crowd be judge of fit and just,
And kings are only officers in trust,
Then this resuming covenant was declared
When kings were made, or is for ever barred.
Is those who gave the secptre could not tie
By their own deed their own posterity,
How then could Adam bind his future race ?
How could his forfeit on mankind take place ?
Or how could heavenly justice damn us all
Who ne'er consented to our father's fall ?
Then kings are slaves to those whom they command
And tenants to their people's pleasure stand,
Add that the power for property allowed ;
Is mischievously seated in the crowd :
For who can be secure of private right,
If sovereign sway may be dissolved by might ?
Nor is the people's judgment always true :
The most may err as grossly as the few,
And faultless kings run down by common cry
For vice, oppression, and for tyranny.
What standard is there in a fickle rout,
Which, flowing to the mark, runs faster out ?
Nor only crowds but Sanhedrins may be
And share the madness of rebellious times,
To murder monarchs for imagined crimes.

If they may give and take whene'er they please,
Not kings alone, the Godhead's images,
But government itself at length must fall
To nature's state, where all have right to all.
Yet grant our lords, the people, kings can make,
What prudent men a settled throne would shake?
For whatsoe'er their sufferings were before,
That change they covet makes them suffer more.
All other errors but disturb a state,
But innovation is the blow of fate
If ancient fabrics nod and threat to fall,
To patch the flaws and buttress up the well,
Thus far 'tis duty: but here fix the mark;
For all beyond it is to touch our ark.
To change foundations, cast the frame anew,
Is work for rebels who base ends pursue,
At once divine and human laws control,
And mend the parts by ruin of the whole.
The tampering world is subject to this curse,
To physic their disease into a worse.

Now what relief can righteous David bring?
How fatal 'tis to be too good a king!
Friends he has few, so high the madness grows;
Who dare be such must be the people's foes.
Yet some there were even in the worst of days;
Some let me name, and naming is to praise.

In this short file Barzillai first appears,
Barzillai, crowned with honour and with years,
Long since the rising rebels he withstood
In regions waste beyond the Jordan's flood:
Unfortunately brave to buoy the state,
But sinking underneath his master's fate.
In exile with his godlike prince he mourned.
For him he suffered, and with him returned.
The court he practised, not the courtier's art:
Large was his wealth, but larger was his heart,
Which well the noblest objects knew to chuse,
The fighting warrior, and recording Muse.

His bed could once a fruitful issue boast ;
Now more than half a father's name is lost.
His eldest hope, with every grace adorned,
By me, so Heaven will have it, always mourned
And always honoured, snatched in manhood's prime
By unequal fates and Providence's crime :
Yet not before the goal of honour won,
All part fulfilled of subject and son ;
Swift was the race, but short the time to run.
Oh narrow circle, but of power divine,
Scanted in space, but perfect in thy line !
By sea, by land, thy matchless worth was known
Arms thy delight, and war was all thy own :
Thy force infused the fainting Tyrians propped ;
And haughty Pharaoh found his fortune stopped.
Oh ancient honour ! oh unconquered hand,
Whom foes unpunished never could withstand !
But Israel was unworthy of thy name :
Short is the date of all immoderate fame.
It looks as Heaven our ruin had designed,
And durst not trust thy fortune and thy mind.
Now, free from earth, thy disencumbered soul
Mounts up, and leaves behind the clouds and starry pole
From thence thy kindred legions mayest thou bring
To aid the guardian angel of thy King.
Here stop, my Muse, here cease thy painful flight ;
No pinions can pursue immortal height :
Tell good Barzillai thou canst sing no more,
And tell thy soul she should have fled before :
Or fled she with his life, and left this verse
To hang on her departed patron's hearse ?
Now take thy steepy flight from heaven, and see
If thou canst find on earth another he :
Another he would be too hard to find ;
See then whom thou canst see not far behind.
Zadoc the priest, whom, shunning power and place,
His lowly mind advanced to David's grace.
With him the Sagan of Jerusalem,
Of hospitable soul and noble stem ;
Him of the western dome, whose weighty sense

Flows in fit words and heavenly eloquence.
The Prophets' sons, by subh example led,
To learning and to loyalty were bred:
For colleges on bounteous kings depend,
And never rebel was to arts a friend.
To these succeed the pillars of the laws,
Who best could plead, and best can judge a cause.
Next them a train of loyal peers ascend;
Sharp-judging Adriel, the Muses' friend,
Himself a Muse: in Sanhedrin's debate
True to his Prince, but not a slave of state;
Whom David's love with honours did adorn
That from his disobedient son were torn.
Jotham of piercing wit and pregnant thought,
Endued by nature and by learning taught
To move assemblies, who but only tried
The worse a while, then chose the better side,
Nor chose alone, but turned the balance too,
So much the weight of one brave man can do.
Hushai, the friend of David in distress,
In public storms of manly steadfastness;
By foreign treaties he informed his youth
And joined experience to his native truth.
His frugal care supplied the wanting throne,
Frugal for that, but bounteous of his own:
'Tis easy conduct when exchequers flow,
But hard the task to manage well the low.
For sovereign power is too depressed or high,
When kings are forced to sell or crowds to buy.
Indulge one labour more, my weary Muse,
For Amiel: who can Amiel's praise refuse?
Of ancient race by birth, but nobler yet
In his own worth and without title great:
The Sanhedrin long time as chief he ruled,
Their reason guided and their passion cooled:
So dexterous was he in the Crown's defence,
So formed to speak a loyal nation's sense,
That, as their band was Israel's tribes in small,
So fit was he to represent them all.
Now rasher charioteers the seat ascend,

Whose loose careers his steady skill commend :
They, like the unequal ruler of the day,
Misguide the seasons and mistake the way,
While he, withdrawn, at their mad labour smiles
And safe enjoys the sabbath of his toils.

These were the chief, a small but faithful band
Of worthies in the breach who dared to stand
And tempt the united fury of the land.
With grief they viewed such powerful engines bent
To batter down the lawful government.
A numerous faction, with pretended frights,
In Sanhedrins to plume the regal rights ;
The true successor from the Court removed ;
The plot by hireling witnesses improved.
These ills they saw, and, as their duty bound,
They showed the King the danger of the wound ;
That no concessions from the throne would please,
But lenitives fomented the disease ;
That Absalom, ambitious of the crown,
Was made the lure to draw the people down ;
That false Achitophel's pernicious hate
Had turned the plot to ruin Church and State ;
The council violent, the rabble worse ;
The Shimei taught Jerusalem to curse.

With all these loads of injuries opprest,
And long revolving in his careful breast
The event of things, at last his patience tired,
Thus from his royal throne, by Heaven inspired,
The godlike David spoke ; with awful fear
His train their Maker in their master hear.

"Thus long have I, by native mercy swayed,
"My wrongs dissembled, my revenge delayed ;
"So willing to forgive the offending age ;
"So much the father did the king assuage.
"But now so far my clemency they slight,
"The offenders question my forgiving right.
"That one was made for many, they contend ;
"But 'tis to rule, for that's a monarch's end.

"They call my tenderness of blood my fear,
"Though manly tempers can the longest bear.
"Yet since they will divert my native course,
"'Tis time to show I am not good by force.
"Those heaped affronts that haughty subjects bring
"Are burdens for a camel, not a king.
"Kings are the public pillars of the State,
"Born to sustain and prop the nation's weight:
"If my young Samson will pretend a call
"To shake the column, let him share the fall;
"But oh that yet he would repent and live!
"How easy 'tis for parents to forgive!
"With how few tears a pardon might be won
"From nature, pleading for a darling son!
"Poor pitied youth, by my paternal care
"Raised up to all the height his frame could bear!
"Had God ordained his fate for empire born,
"He would have given his soul another turn:
"Gulled with a patriot's name, whose modern sense
"Is one that would by law supplant his prince;
"The people's brave, the politician's tool;
"Never was patriot yet but was a fool.
"Whence comes it that religion and the laws
"Should more be Absalom's than David's cause?
"His old instructor, ere he lost his place,
"Was never thought endued with so much grace.
"Good heavens, how faction can a patriot paint!
"My rebel ever proves my people's saint.
"Would they impose an heir upon the throne?
"Let Sanhedrins be taught to give their own.
"A king's at least a part of government,
"And mine as requisite as their consent:
"Without my leave a future king to choose
"Infers a right the present to depose.
"True, they petition me to approve their choice:
"But Esau's hands suit ill with Jacob's voice.
"My pious subjects for my safety pray,
"Which to secure, they take my power away.
"From plots and treasons Heaven preserve my years,
"But save me most from my petitioners.

"Unsatiate as the barren womb or grave,
"God cannot grant to much as they can crave.
"What then is left but with a jealous eye
"To guard the small remains of royalty ?
"The law shall still direct my peachful sway,
"And the same law teach rebels to obey :
"Votes shall no more established power control,
"Such votes as make a part exceed the whole.
"No groundless clamours shall my friend remove
"Nor crowds have power to punish ere they prove ;
"For gods and godlike kings their care express
"Still to defend their servants in distress.
"Oh that my power to saving were confined !
"Why am I forced, like Heaven, against my mind
"To make examples of another kind ?
"Must I at length the sword of justice draw ?
"Oh curst effects of necessary law !
"How ill my fear they by my mercy scan !
"Beware the fury of a patient man.
"Law they require, let Law then show her face ;
"They could not be content to look on Grace,
"Her hinder parts, but with a daring eye
"To tempt the terror of her front and die.
"By their own arts, 'tis righteously decreed.
"Those dire artificers of death shall bleed.
"Against themselves their witnesses will swear
"Till viper-like, their mother-plot they tear,
"And suck for nutriment that bloody gore
"Which was their principle of life before.
"Their belial with their Beelzebub will fight ;
"Thus on my foes my foes shall do me right,
"Nor doubt the event ; for factious crowds engage
"In their first onset all their brutal rage.

"Then let them take an unresisted course ;
"Retire and traverse, and delude their force :
"But when they stand all breathless, urge the fight
"And rise upon them with redoubled might :
"For lawful power is still superior found,
"When long driven back at length it stands the ground".

He said : The Almighty, nodding, gave consent ;
And peals of thunder shook the firmament.
Henceforth a series of new time began,
The mighty years in long procession ran ;
Once more the godlike David was restored,
And willing nations knew their lawful lord.

THE SECOND PART OF

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

A POEM.

"Si quis tamen hæc quoque, si quis
Captus amore leget".

VIRG. *Ecl.* VI. 10.

[*By* NAHUM TATE, *with assistance from* DRYDEN.]

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

THE SECOND PART

Since men, like beasts, each other's prey, were made,
Since trade began and priesthood grew a trade,
Since realms were formed, none sure so cursed as those
That madly their own happiness oppose ;
There Heaven itself and godlike kings in vain
Shower down the manna of a gentle reign ;
While pampered crowds to mad sedition run
And monarchs by indulgence are undone.
Thus David's clemency was fatal grown,
While wealthy faction awed the wanting throne.
For now their sovereign's orders to contemn
Was held the charter of Jerusalem ;
His rights to invade, his tributes to refuse,
A privilege peculiar to the Jews ;
As if from heavenly call this licence fell
And Jacob's seed were chosen to rebel !

Achitophel with triumph sees his crimes
Thus suited to the madness of the times.
And Absalom, to make his hopes succeed,
Of flattery's charms no longer stands in need,
While fond of change, though ne'er so dearly bought
Our tribes outstrip the youth's ambitious thought.
His swiftest hopes with swifter homage meet,
And crowd their servile necks beneath his feet.
Thus to his aid while pressing tides repair,
He mounts and spreads his streamers in the air.
The charms of empire might his youth mislead;
But what can our besotted Israel plead ?
Swayed by a monarch, whose serene command
Seems half the blessing of our promised land ;
Whose only grievance is excess of ease,
Freedom our pain, and plenty our disease !
Yet, as all folly would lay claim to sense
And wickedness ne'er wanted a pretence,
With arguments they'd make their treason good
And righteous David's self with slanders load :
That arts of foreign sway he did affect
And guilty Jebusites from law protect,
Whose very chiefs, convict, were never freed,
Nay we have seen their sacrificers bleed !
Accuser's infamy is urged in vain,
While in the bounds of sense they did contain,
But soon they launched into the unfathomed tide
And in the depths they knew disdained to ride ;
For probable discoveries to dispense
Was thought below a pensioned evidence.
Mere truth was dull, nor suited with the port
Of pampered Corah, when advanced to court.
No less than wonders now they will impose
And projects void of grace or sense disclose.
Such was the charge on pious Michal brought,
Michal, that ne'er was cruel even in thought ;
The best of queens and most obedient wife
Impeached of curst designs on David's life !
His life, the theme of her eternal prayer ;
'Tis scarce so much his guardian angel's care.

Not summer morns such mildness can disclose,
The Hermon lily nor the Sharon rose.
Neglecting each vain pomp of majesty,
Transported Michal feeds her thought on high.
She lives with angels and, as angels do,
Quits heaven sometimes to bless the world below,
Where, cherished by her bounty's plenteous spring,
Reviving widows smile and orphans sing.
Oh ! when rebellious Israel's crimes at height
Are threatened with her lord's approaching fate,
The piety of Michal then remain
In Heaven's remembrance and prolong his reign.

Less desolation did the pest pursue
That from Dan's limits to Beersheba slew,
Less fatal the repeated wars of Tyre,
And less Jerusalem's avenging fire ;
With gentles terror these our State o'erran,
Than since our evidencing days began !
On every cheek a pale confusion sat,
Continued fear beyond the worst of fate !
Trust was no more, art, science, useless made,
All occupations lost but Corah's trade.
Meanwhile; a guard on modest Corah wait,
If not for safety, needful yet for state.
Well might he deem each peer and prince his slave.
And lord it o'er the tribes which he could save :
Even vice in him was virtue ; what sad fate
But for his honesty, had seized our State ?
And with what tyranny had we been curst,
Had Corah never proved a villain first ?
To have told his knowledge of the intrigue in gross,
Had been, alas ! to our deponent's loss :
The travelled Levite had the experience got
To husband well and make the best of his plot,
And therefore, like an evidence of skill,
With wise reserves secured his pension still,
Nor quite of future power himself bereft,
But limbos large for unbelievers left.
For now his writ such reverence had got,

'Twas worse than plotting to suspect his plot.
Some were so well convinced, they made no doubt
Themselves to help the foundered swearers out;
Some had their sense imposed on by their fear,
But more for interest sake believe and swear:
E'en to that height with some the frenzy grew,
They raged to find their danger not prove true.

Yet than all these a viler crew remain,
Who with Achitophel the cry maintain;
Not urged by fear, nor through misguided sense,
(Blind zeal and starving need had some pretence;)
But for the good old cause, that did excite
The original rebels' wiles, revenge, and spite,
These raise the plot, to have the scandal thrown
Upon the bright successor of the crown,
Whose virtue with such wrongs they had pursued
As seemed all hope of pardon to exclude.
Thus, while on private ends their zeal is built.
The cheated crowd applaud and share their guilt.

Such practices as these, too gross to lie
Long unobserved by each discerning eye,
The more judicious Israelites unspelled,
Though still the charm the giddy rabble held.
Even Absalom amid the dazzling beams
Of empire and ambition's flattering dreams,
Perceives the plot too foul to be excused,
To aid designs no less pernicious used;
And, filial sense yet striving in his breast,
Thus to Achitophel his doubts exprest:

"Why are my thoughts upon a crowd employed,
"Which once obtained can be but half enjoyed?
"Not so, when virtue did my arms require
"And to my father's wars I flew entire.
"My regal power how will my foes resent,
"When I myself have scarc my own consent?
"Give me a son's unblemished truth again
"Or quench the sparks of duty that remain,

"How slight to force a throne that legions guard
"The task to me : to prove unjust, how hard !
"And if the imagined guilt thus wound my thought,
"What will it, when the tragic scene is wrought ?
"Dire war must first be conjured from below,
"The realm we'd rule we first must overthrow ;
"And when the civil Furies are on wing
"That blind and undistinguished slaughters fling,
"Who knows what impious chance may reach the King ?
"Oh ! rather let me perish in the strife,
"Than have my crown the price of David's life !
"Or if the tempest of the war he stand,
"In peace some vile officious villain's hand
"His soul's anointed temple may invade,
"Or pressed by clamorous crowds, myself be made
"His murderer ; rebellious crowds, whose guilt
"Shall dread his vengeance till his blood be spilt ;
"Which if my filial tenderness oppose,
"Since to the empire by their arms I rose,
"Those very arms on me shall be employed,
"A new usurper crowned and I destroyed.
"The same pretence of public good will hold
"And new Achitophels be found as bold.
"To urge the needful change, perhaps the old."

He said. The statesman with a smile replies,
A smile that did his rising spleen disguise :
"My thoughts presumed our labours at an end,
"And are we still with conscience to contend ?
"Whose want in kings as needful is allowed
"As 'tis for them to find it in the crowd.
"Far in the doubtful passage you are gone,
"And only can be safe by pressing on.
"The crown's true heir, a prince severe and wise,
"Has viewed your motions long with jealous eyes,
"Your person's charms, your more prevailing arts ;
"And marked your progress in the people's hearts ;
"Whose patience is the effect of stinted power,
"But treasures vengeance for the fatal hour ;
"And if remote the peril he can bring.

"Your present danger's greater from the King.
"Let not a parent's name deceive your sense,
"Nor trust the father in a jealous Prince !
"Your trivial faults if he could so resent
"To doom you little less than banishment,
"What range must your presumption since inspire,
"Against his orders your return from Tyre ?
"Nor only so, but with a pomp more high
"And open court of popularity,
"The factious tribes"—"And this reproof from thee !"
"The Prince replies, "O statesman's winding skill,
"They first condemn that first advised the ill"
"Illustratious youth," returned Achitophel,
"Misconstrue not the words that mean you well.
"The course you steer I worthy blame conclude,
"But 'tis because you leave it unpursued.
"A monarch's crown with fate surrounded lies,
"Who reach lay hold on death that miss the prize.
"Did you this expose yourself to show
"And to the crowd bow popularly low.
"For this your glorious progress next ordain,
"With chariots, horsemen, and a numerous train,
"With fame before you like the morning star,
"And shouts of joy saluting from afar ?
"Oh, from the heights you've reached but take a view,
"Scarce leading Lucifer could fall like you !
"And must I have my shipwrecked arts bemoan,
"Have I for this so oft made Israel groan,
"Your single interest with the nation weighed,
"And turned the scale where your desires were laid,
"Even when at helm a course so dangerous moved,
"To land your hopes, as my removal proved ?"

"I not dispute," the royal youth replies,
"The known perfection of your policies ;
"Nor in Achitophel yet grudge or blame
"The privilege that statesmen ever claim ;
"Who private interest never yet pursued,
"But still pretended 'twas for others' good.
"What politician yet e'er scaped his fate

"Who, saving his own neck, not saved the State ?
"From hence on every humorous wind that veered
"With shifted sails a several course you steered.
"What form of sway did David e'er pursue
"That seemed like absolute, put sprung from you ?
"Who at your instance quashed each penal law
"That kept dissenting factious Jews in awe ;
"And who suspends fixed laws may abrogate,
"That done, form new, and so enslave state.
"Even property, whose champion now you stand,
"And seem for this the idol of the land,
"Did ne'er sustain such violence before
"As when your counsel shut the royal store ;
"Advice that ruin to whole tribes procured,
"But secret kept till your own banks secured.
"Recount with this the triple covenant broke,
"And Israel fitted for a foreign yoke ;
"Nor here your counsels' fatal progress stayed,
"But sent our levied powers to Pharaoh's said ;
"Hence Tyre and Israel, low in ruins laid,
"And Egypt, once their scorn, their common terror made.
"Even yet of such a season we can dream,
"When royal rights you made your darling theme.
"For power unlimited could reasons draw
"And place prerogative above the law ;
"Which on your fall from office grew unjust,
"The laws made king, the king a slave in trust :
"Whom with state-craft, to interest only true,
"You now accuse of ills contrived by you."
To this Hell's agent—"Royal youth, fix here,
"Let interest be the star by which I steer ;
"Hence, to repose your trust in me was wise,
"Whose interest most in your advancement lies ;
"A tie so firm as always will avail
"When friendship, nature, and religion fail.
"On ours the safety of the crowd depends,
"Secure the crowd, and we obtain our ends,
"Whom I will cause so far our guilt to share,
"Till they are made our champions by their fear.
"What opposition can your rival bring,

"While Sandherins are jealous of the king ?
"His strength as yet in David's friendship lies,
"And what can David's self without supplies ?
"Who with exclusive bills must now dispense,
"Debar the heir or strave in his defence ;
"Conditions which our elders ne'er will quit
"And David's justice never can admit.
"Or forced by wants his brother to betray,
"To your ambition next he clears the way ;
"For if succession once to nought they bring,
"Their next advance removes the present King :
"Persisting else his senates to dissolve
"In equal hazard shall his reign involve.
"Our tribes, whom Pharaoh's power so much alarms,
"Shall rise without their Prince to oppose his arms.
"Nor boots it on what cause at first they join ;
"Their troops, once up, are tools for our design.
"At least such subtle covenants shall be made,
"Till peace itself is war in masquerade.
"Associations of mysterious sense,
"Against, but seeming for, the King's defence,
"Even on their courts of justice fetters draw
"And from our agents muzzle up their law.
"By which a conquest if we fail to make,
" 'Tis a drawn game at worst, and we secure our stake."

He said, and for the dire success depends
On various sects, by common guilt made friends ;
Whose heads, though ne'er so differing in their creed,
In the point of treason yet were well agreed.
'Mongst these, extorting Ishban first appears,
Pursued by a meagre troop of bankrupt heirs.
Blest times when Ishban, he whose occupation
So long has been to cheat, reforms the nation !
Ishban of conscience suited to his trade,
As good a saint as usurer ever made.
Yet Mammon has not so engrossed him quite
But Belial lays as large a claim of spite,
Who for those pardons from his Prince he draws
Returns reproaches, and cries up the cause.
That year in which the City he did sway,

He left rebellion in a hopeful way ;
Yet his ambition once was found so bold
To offer talents of extorted gold,
Could David's wants have so been bribed to shame
And scandalize our peerage with his name ;
For which his dear sedition he'd forswear,
And e'en turn loyal, to be made a peer:
Next him, let railing Rabsheka have place,
So full of zeal he has no need of grace ;...........
What caution could appear too much in him
That keeps the treasure of Jerusalem !
Let David's brother but approach the town,
"Double our guards", he cries, "we are undone !"
Protesting that he dares not sleep in his bed.
"Lest he should rise next morn without his head."
Next these, a troop of busy spirits press,
Of little fortunes and of conscience less ;
With them the tribe, whose luxury had drained.
Their banks, in former sequestrations gained ;
Who rich and great by past rebellions grew,
And long to fish the troubled waves anew.
Some future hopes, some present paymant draws
To tell their conscience and espouse the cause ;
Such stipends those vile hirelings best befit,
Priests without grace and poets without wit.
Shall that false Hebronite escape our curse,
Judas, that keeps the rebels' pension purse,
Judas, that pays the treason-writer's fee,
Judas, that well deserves his namesake's tree,
Who at Jerusalem's own gates erects
His college for a nursery of sects,
Young prophets with an early care secures,
And with the dung of his own arts manures ?
What have the men of Hebron here to do ?
What part in Israel's promised land have you ?
Here Phaleg, the lay Hebronite, is come,
'Cause like the rest he could not live at home ;
Who from his own possessions could not drain
An omer even of Hebronitish grain,
Here struts it like a patriot, and talks high

Of injured subjects, altered property :
An emblem of that buzzing insect just
That mounts the wheel, and thinks she raises dust .....
A waiting-man to travelling nobles chose,
He his own laws would saucily impose,
Till bastinadoed back again he went
To learn those manners he to teach was sent.
Chastised he ought to have retreated home,
But he reads politics to Absalom ;
For never Hebronite, though kicked and scorned,
To his own country willingly returned.

But leaving famished Phaleg to be fed
And to talk treason for his daily bread,
Let Hebron, nay let Hell, produce a man
So made for mischief as Ben Jochanan ;
A Jew of humble parentage was he,
By trade a Levite, though of low degree :
His pride no higher than the desk aspired,
But for the drudgery of priests was hired
To read and pray in linen ephod brave
And pick up single shekels from the grave.
Married at last, and finding charge come faster,
He could not live by God, but changed his master :
Inspired by want, was made a factious tool,
They got a villain, and we lost a fool.
Still violent, whatever cause he took,
But most against the party he forsook :
For renegadoes, who ne'er turn by halves,
Are bound in conscience to be double knaves.
So this prose prophet took most monstrous pains
To let his masters see he earned his gains.
But as the Devil owes all his imps a shame,
He chose the Apostate for his proper theme ;
With little pains he made the picture true,
And from reflection took the rogue he drew.
A wondrous work, to prove the Jewish nation

In every age a murmuring generation,
To trace them from their infancy of sinning,
And show them factious from their first beginning,
To prove they could rebel, and rail, and mock,
Much to the credit of the chosen flock ;
A strong authority which must convince,
That saints own no allegiance ; to their prince ;
But tell me, did the drunken partriarch bless
The son that showed his father's nakedness ?
Such thanks the present Church thy pen will give,
Which proves rebellion was so primitive.
Must ancient failings be examples made ?
Then murderers from Cain may learn their trade.
As thou the heathen and the saint hast drawn.
Methinks the Apostate was the better man,
And thy hot father, waving my respect,
Not of a mother church but of a sect.
And such he needs must be of thy inditing,
This comes of drinking asses' milk and writing.
If Balak should be called to leave his place,
(As profit is the loudest call of grace,)
His temple, dispossessed of one, would be
Replenished with seven devils more by thee.

Levi, thou art a load, I'll lay thee down,
And show rebellion bare, without a gown :
Poor slaves in metre, dull and addle-pated,
Who rhyme below even David's psalms translated ;
Some in my speedy pace I must outrun,
As lame Mephibosheth the wizard's son ;
To make quick way I'll leap o'er heavy blocks,
Shun rotten Uzza as I would the pox ;
And hasten Og and Doeg to rehearse,
Two fools that crutch their feeble sense on verse,
Who by my Muse to all succeeding times
Shall live in spite of their own dogrel rhymes.

Doeg, though without knowing how or why,
Made still a blundering king of melody ;
Spurred boldly on, and dashed through thick and thin.
Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in ;

Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,
And, in one word, heroically mad,
He was too warm on picking-work to dwell.
But faggoted his notions as they fell,
And, if they rhymed and rattled, all was well.
Spiteful he is not, though he wrote a satire,
For still there goes some thinking to ill-nature ;
He needs no more than birds and beasts to think,
All his occasions are to eat and drink.
If he call rogue and rascal from a garret,
He means you no more mischief than a parrot ;
The words for friend and foe alike were made,
To fetter them in verse is all his trade.........
Let him be gallows-free by my consent,
And nothing suffer, since he nothing meant ;
Hanging supposes human soul and reason,
This animal's below committing treason:
Shall he be hanged who never could rebel ?
That's a preferment for Achitophel ....
Railing in other men may be a crime,
But ought to pass for mere instinct in him ;
Instinct he follows and no farther knows,
For to write verse with him is to *transprose* ;
'Twere pity treason at his door to lay
Who makes heaven's gates a lock to its own key ;
Let him rail on, let his invective Muse
Have four and twenty letters to abuse,
Which if he jumbles to one line of sense,
Indict him of a capital offence.
In fire-works give him leave to vent his spite,
Those are the only serpents he can write ;
The height of his ambition is, we know,
But to be master of a puppet-show ;
On that one stage his works may yet appear,
And a month's harvest keeps him all the year.

Now stop your noses, readers, all and some,
For here's a tun of midnight work to come,
Og from a treason-tavern rolling home.
Round as a globe, and liquored every chink,

Goodly and great he sails behind his link.
With all this bulk there's nothing lost in Og.
For every inch that is not fool is rogue :........
When wine has given him courage to blaspheme,
He curses God, but God before cursed him ;
And if man could have reason, none has more,
That made his paunch so rich and him so poor.
With wealth he was not trusted, for Heaven knew
What 'twas of old to pamper up a Jew ;
To what would he on quail and pheasant swell
That even on tripe and carrion could rebel ?
But though Heaven made him poor, with reverence speaking,
He never was a poet of God's making ;
The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull,
With this prophetic blessing—*Be thou dull* ;
Drink, swear, and roar, forbear no lewd delight
Fit for thy bulk, do anything but write,
Thou art of lasting make, like thoughtless men,
A strong nativity—but for the pen ;
Eat opium, mingle arsenic in thy drink
Still thou mayest live, avoiding pen and ink.
I see, I see, 'tis counsel given in vain,
For treason, botched in rhyme, will be thy bane ;
Rhyme is the rock on which thou art to wreck,
'Tis fatal to thy fame and to thy neck.
Why should thy metre good King David blast ?
A psalm of his will surely be thy last.
Darest thou presume in verse to meet thy foes.
Thou whom the penny pamphlet foiled in prose ?
Doeg, whom God for mankind's mirth has made,
O'ertops thy talent in thy very trade ;
Doeg to thee, thy paintings are so coarse,
A poet is, though he's the poet's horse.
A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull
For writing treason and for writing dull ;
To die for faction is a common evil,
But to be hanged for nonsense is the devil,
Hadst thou the glories of thy King exprest,
Thy praises had been satires at the best ;
But thou in clumsy verse, unlicked, unpointed,

Hast shamefully defied the Lord's anointed:
I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes?
But of king David's foes be this the doom,
May all be like the young man Absalom;
And for my foes may this their blessing be,
To talk like Doeg and to write like thee.

Achitophel each rank, degree, and age
For various ends neglects not to engage,
The wise and rich for purse aud counsel brought,
The fools and beggars for their number sought,
Who yet not only on the town depends,
For even in court the faction had its friends.
These thought the places they possessed too small,
And in their hearts wished court and king to fall:
Whose names the Muse, disdaining, holds in the dark,
Thrust in the villain herd without a mark
With parasites and libel-spawning imps,
Intriguing fops, dull jesters, and worse pimps,
Disdain the rascal rabble to pursue,
Their set cabals are yet a viler crew.
See where involved in common smoke they sit,
Some for our mirth, some for our satire fit;
These gloomy, thoughtful, and on mischief bent,
While those for mere good fellowship frequent
The appointed club, can let sedition pass;
Sense, nonsense, anything to employ the glass;
And who believe in their dull honest hearts,
The rest talk treason but to show their parts;
Who ne'er had wit or will for mischief yet,
But pleased to be reputed of a set

But in the sacred annals of our plot
Industrious Arod never be forgot:
The labours of this midnight-magistrate
May vie with Corah's to preserve the State.
In search of arms he failed not to lay hold
On war's most powerful dangerous weapon, gold.
And last, to take from Jebusites all odds,

Their altars pillaged, stole their very gods.
Oft would he cry, when treasure he surprised,
'Tis Baalish gold in David's coin disguised ;
Which to his house with richer relicts came
While lumber idols only fed the flame :
For our wise rabble ne'er took pains to inquire,
What 'twas he burnt, so it made a rousing fire,
With which our elder was enriched no more
Than false Gehazi with the Syrian's store ;
So poor, that when our choosing tribes were met,
Even for his stinking votes he ran in debt ;
For meat the wicked and, as authors think ;
The saints he choused for his electing drink ;
Thus every shift and subtle method past,
And all to be no Zaken at the last.

Now, raised on Tyre's sad ruins, Pharaoh's pride
Soared high, his legions threatening far and wide ;
As when a bettering storm engendered high,
By winds upheld, hangs hovering in the sky,
Is gazed upon by every trembling swain,
This for his vineyard fears, and that his grain,
For blooming plants and flowers new opening these,
For lambs eaned lately and far-labouring bees,
To guard his stock each to the gods does call,
Uncertain where the fire-charged clouds will fall ;
Even so the doubtful nations watch his arms,
With terror each expecting his alarms.
Where, Judah, where was now thy lion's roar
Thou only couldst the captive lands restore :
But thou, with inbred broils and faction prest.
From Egypt needst a guardian with the rest.
Thy Prince from Sanhedrims no trust allowed,
Too much the representers of the crowd,
Who for their own defence give no supply
But what the Crown's prerogatives must buy ;
As if their Monarch's rights to violate
More needful were than to preserve the State !
From present dangers they divert their care,
And all their fears are of the royal heir,

Whom now the reigning malice of his foes
Unjudged would sentence and ere crowned depose:
Religion the pretence, but their decree
To bar his reign, whate'er his faith shall be.
By Sanhedrims and clamorous crowds thus prest,
What passion rent the righteous David's breast?
Who knows not how to oppose or to comply,
Unjust to grant and dangerous to deny!
How near in this dark juncture Israel's fate,
Whose peace one sole expedient could create,
Which yet the extremest virtue did require
Even of that Prince whose downfall they conspire?
His absence David does with tears advise,
To appease their rage; undaunted he complies.
Thus he who, prodigal of blood and ease,
A royal life exposed to winds and seas,
At once contending with the waves and fire,
And heading danger in the wars of Tyre,
Inglorious now forsakes his native sand
And, like an exile, quits the promised land.
Our Monarch scarce from pressing tears refrains,
And painfully his royal state maintains.
Who, now embracing on the extremest shore,
Almost revokes what he enjoined before:
Concludes at last more trust to be allowed
To storms and seas than to the raging crowd.
Forbear, rash Muse, the parting scene to draw,
With silence charmed as deep as theirs that saw!
Not only our attending nobles weep,
But hardy sailors swell with tears the deep;
The tide restrained her course, and more amazed
The twin-stars on the royal brothers gazed:
While this sole fear——
Does trouble to our suffering hero bring,
Lest next the popular rage oppress the King.
Thus parting, each for the other's danger grieved,
The shore the King, and seas the Prince received.
Go, injured hero, while propitious gales,
Soft as thy consort's breath, inspire thy sails.
Well may she trust her beauties on a flood

Where thy triumphant fleet so oft have rode.
Safe on thy breast reclined, her rest be deep ;
Rocked like a Nereid by the waves asleep ;
While happiest dreams her fancy entertain,
And to Elysian fields convert the main !
Go, injured hero, while the shores of Tyre
At thy approach so silent shall admire ;
Who on thy thunder still their thought employ
And greet thy landing with a trembling joy.

On heroes thus the prophet's fate is thrown,
Admired by every nation but their own ;
Yet while our factious Jews his worth deny,
Their aching conscience gives their tongue the lie.
Even in the worst of men the noblest parts
Confess him, and he triumphs in their hearts,
Whom to his King the best respects commend
Of subject, soldier, kinsman, prince and friend :
All sacred names of most divine esteem,
And to perfection all sustained by him ;
Wise, just, and constant, courtly without art
Swift to discern and to reward desert ;
No hour of his in fruitless ease destroyed,
But on the noblest subjects still employed ;
Whose steady soul ne'er learnt to separate
Between his Monarch's interest and the State,
But heaps those blessings on the royal head,
Which he well knows must be on subjects shed.

On what pretence could then the vulgar rage
Against his worth, and native rights engage ?
Religious fears their argument are made,
Religious fears his sacred rights invade !
Of future superstition they complain
And Jebusitic worship in his reign,
With such alarms his foes the crowd deceive,
With dangers fright which not themselves believe.

Since nothing can our sacred rites remove
Whate'er the faith of the successor prove,
Our Jews their ark shall undisturbed retain,

At least while their religion is their gain.
Who know by old experience Baals' commands
Not only claimed their conscience but their lands ;
They grudge God's tithes, how therefore shall they yield
An idol full possession of the field ?
Grant such a prince enthroned, we must confess
The people's sufferings than that monarch's less,
Who must to hard conditions still be bound
And for his quiet with the crowd compound ;
Or should his thoughts to tyranny incline,
Where are the means to compass the design ?
Our crown's revenues are too short a store,
And jealous Sanhedrims would give no more.

As vain our fears of Egypt's potent aid ;
Not so has Pharaoh learnt ambition's trade,
Nor ever with such measures can comply
As shock the common rules of policy.
None dread like him the growth of Israel's king,
And he alone sufficient aids can bring,
Who knows that prince to Egypt can give law
That on our stubborn tribes his yoke could draw.
At such profound expense he has not stood,
Nor dyed for this his hands so deep in blood ;
Would ne'er through wrong and right his progress take,
Grudge his own rest, and keep the world awake,
To fix a lawless prince on Judah's throne,
First to invade our rights, and then his own ;
His dear-gained conquests cheaply to despoil,
And reap the harvest of his crimes and toil.
We grant his wealth vast as our ocean's sand
And curse its fatal influence on our land,
Which our bribed Jews so numerously partake
That even an host his pensioners would make.
From these deceivers our divisions spring,
Our weakness and the growth of Egypt's king :
These with pretended friendship to the State
Our crowd's suspicion of their Prince create,
Both pleased and frightened with the specious cry,
To guard their sacred rights and property ;

To ruin thus the chosen flock are sold.
While wolves are ta'en for guardians of the fold ;
Seduced by these we groundlessly complain,
And loathe the manna of a gently reign :
Thus our forefathers' crooked paths are trod,
We trust our Prince no more than they their God.
But all in vain our reasoning prophets preach
To those whom sad experience ne'er could teach ;
Who can commence new broils in bleeding scars
And fresh remembrance of intestine wars ;
When the same household mortal foes did yield ;
And brothers stained with brothers' blood the field ;
When sons' curst steel the fathers' gore did stain,
And mothers mourned for sons by fathers stain !
When thick as Egpyt's locusts on the sand
Our tribes lay slaughtered through the promised land.
Whose few survivors with worse fate remain,
To drag the bondage of a tyrant's reign ;
Which scene of woes unknowing we renew,
And madly even those ills we fear pursue ;
While Pharaoh laughs at our domestic broils
And safely crowds his tents with nation's spoils.
Yet our fierce Sanhedrim in restless rage
Against our absent hero still engage,
And chiefly urge, such did their frenzy prove,
The only suit their prince forbids to move ;
Which till obtained, the cease affairs of state,
And real dangers wave for groundless hate.
Long David's patience waits relief to bring
With all the indulgence of a lawful king,
Expecting till the troubled waves would cease,
But found the raging billows still increase.
The crowd, whose insolence forbearance swells,
While he forgives too far, almost rebels.
At last his deep resentments silence broke,
The imperial palace shook, while thus he spoke :

"Then Justice wake, and Rigour take her time,
"For lo ! our mercy is become our crime.
"While halting punishment her stroke delays,

"Our sovereign right, Heaven's sacred trust, decays !
"For whose support even subjects' interest calls,
"Woe to that kingdom where the monarch falls !
"That prince who yields the least of regal sway
"So far his people's freedom does betray.
"Right lives by law, and law subsists by power ;
"Disarm the shepherd, wolves the flock devour,
"Hard lot of empire o'er a stubborn race,
"Which Heaven itself in vain has tried with grace !
"When will our reason's long-charmed eyes unclose,
"And Israel judge between her friends and foes ?
"When shall we see expired deceivers' sway,
"And credit what our God and monarchs say ?
"Dissembled patriots bribed with Egypt's gold
"Even Sanhedrims in blind obedience hold :
"Those patriots' falsehood in their actions see
"And judge by the pernicious fruit the tree ;
"If aught for which so loudly they declaim,
"Religion, laws, and freedom, were their aim,
"Our senates in due methods they had led,
"To avoid those mischiefs which they seemed to dread ;
"But first, ere yet they propped the sinking State,
"To impeach and charge, as urged by private hate,
"Proves that they ne'er believed the fears they prest,
"But barbarously destroyed the nation's rest
"Oh ! whither will ungoverned senates drive,
"And to what bounds licentious votes arrive ?
"When their injustice we are pressed to share,
"The monarch urged to exclude the lawful heir ;
"Are princes thus distinguished from the crowd,
"And this the privilege of royal blood ?
"But grant we should confirm the wrongs they press;
"His sufferings yet were than the people's less ;
"Condemned for life the murdering sword to wield,
"And on their heirs entail a bloody field.
"Thus madly their own freedom they betray
"And for the oppression which they fear make way ;
"Succession fixed by Heaven, the kingdom's bar,
"Which, once dissolved, admits the flood of war ;
"Waste, rapine, spoil, without the assault begin

"And our mad tribes supplant the fence within.
"Since, then, their good they will not understand,
"'Tis time to take the monarch's power in hand;
"Authority and force to join with skill
"And save the lunatics against their will.
"The same rough means that suage the crowd appease
"Our senates, raging with the crowd's disease.
"Henceforth unbiassed measures let them draw
"From no false gloss, but genuine text of law
"Nor urge those crimes upon religion's score
"Themselves so much in Jebusites abhor.
"Whom laws convict, and only they, shall bleed,
"Nor Pharisees by Pharisees be freed.
"Impartial justice from our throne shall shower,
"All shall have right, and we our sovereign power."

He said; the attendants heard with awful joy
And glad presages their fixed thoughts employ;
From Hebron now the suffering heir returned,
A realm that long with civil discord mourned,
Till his approach, like some arriving God,
Composed and healed the place of his abode,
The deluge checked that to Judœa spread,
And stopped sedition at the fountain's head.
Thus in forgiving David's paths he drives
And, chased from Israel, Israel's peace contrives.
The field confessed his power in arms before,
And seas proclaimed his triumphs to the shore;
As nobly has his sway in Hebron shown,
How fit to inherit godlike David's throne,
Through Sion's streets his glad arrival's spread
And conscious faction shrinks her snaky head;
His train their sufferings think o'er paid to see
The crowd's applause with virtue once agree.
Success charms all, but zeal for worth distrest,
A virtue proper to the brave and best;
'Mongst whom was Jothran, Jothran always bent
To serve the Crown, and loyal by descent:
Whose constancy so firm and conduct just
Deserved at once two royal masters' trust;

Who Tyre's proud arms had manfully withstood
On seas, and gathered laurels from flood;
Of learning yet no portion was denied,
Friend to the Muses and the Muses' pride.
Nor can Benaiah's worth forgotten lie,
Of steady soul when public storms were high
Whose conduct while the Moor fierce onsets made
Secured at once our honour and our trade.
Such were the chiefs who most his sufferings mourned,
And viewed with silent joy the prince returned,
While those that sought his absence to betray
Press first their nauseous false respects to pay;
Him still the officious hypocrites molest
And with malicious duty break his rest.
While real transports thus his friends employ,
And foes are loud in their dissembled joy,
His triumphs, so resounded far and near,
Missed not his young ambitious rival's ear;
And as, when joyful hunters' clamorous train
Some slumbering lion wakes in Moab's plain,
Who oft had forced the bold assailants yield,
And scattered his pursuers through the field,
Disdaining furls his mane and tears the ground,
His eyes inflaming all the desert round,
With roar of seas directs his chasers' way,
Provokes from far and dares them to the fray;
Such rage stormed now in Absalom's fierce breast,
Such indignation his fired eyes confest.
Where now was the instructors of his pride?
Slept the old pilot in so rough a tide,
Whose wiles had from the happy shore betrayed,
And thus on shelves the credulous youth conveyed?
In deep revolving thoughts he weights his state,
Secure of craft, nor doubts to baffle fate;
At least, if his stormed bark must go adrift,
To baulk his charge and for himself to shift,
In which his dexterous wit had oft been shown,
And in the wreck of kingdoms saved his own;
But now with more than common danger prest,
Of various resolutions stands possest,

Perceives the crowd's unstable zeal decay,
Lest their recanting chief the cause betray,
Who on a father's grace his hopes may ground
And for his pardon with their heads compound.
Him, therefore, ere his fortune slip her time,
The statesman plots to engage in some bold crime
Past pardon ; whether to attempt his bed,
Or threat with open arms the royal head ;
Or other daring method and unjust
That may confirm him in the people's trust.
But, failing thus to ensnare him, nor secure
How long his foiled ambition may endure,
Plots next to lay him by as past his date,
And try some new pretender's luckier fate ;
Whose hopes with equal toil he would pursue,
Nor cares what claimer's crowned, except the true.
Wake, Absalom, approaching ruin shun,
And see, oh see, for whom thou art undone !
How are thy honours and thy fame betrayed,
The property of desperate villains made !
Lost power and conscious fears their crimes create
And guilt in them was little less than fate ;
But why shouldst thou, from every grievance free,
Forsake thy vineyards for their stormy sea ?
For thee did Canaan's milk and honey flow,
Love dressed thy bowers and laurels sought thy brow,
Preferment, wealth, and power thy vassals were,
And of a monarch all things but the care :
Oh, should our crimes again that curse draw down,
And rebel arms once more attempt the crown,
Sure ruin waits unhappy Absalom,
Alike by conquest or defeat undone.
Who could relentless see such youth and charms
Expire with wretched fate in impious arms,
A prince so formed, with earth's and Heaven's applause,
To triumph o'er crowned heads in David's cause !
Or grant him victor, still his hopes must fail
Who conquering would not for himself prevail ;
The faction whom he trusts for future sway
Him and the public would alike betray ;

Amongst themselves divide the captive State
And found their hydra empire in his fate!
Thus having beat the clouds with painful fight,
The pitied youth with sceptres in his sight,
(So have their cruel politics decreed,)
Must by that crew that made him guilty bleed.
For, could their pride brook any prince's sway,
Whom but mild David would they choose to obey?
Who ones at such a gentle reign repine
The fall of monarchy itself design:
From hate to that their reformations spring,
And David not their grievance, but the King,
Seized now with panic fear the faction lies,
Lest this clear truth strike Absalom's charmed eyes:
Lest he perceive, from long enchantment free,
What all beside the flattered youth must see.
But whate'er douts his troubled bosom swell,
Fair carriage still became Achitophel:
Who now an envious festivals instals
And to survey their strength the faction calls,
Which fraud, religious worship too, must gild;
But oh how weakly does sedition build!
For, lo! the royal mandate issues forth,
Dashing at once their treason, zeal, and mirth.
So have I seen disastrous chance invade,
Where careful emmets had their forage laid;
(Whether fierce Vulcan's rage the furzy plain
Had seized, engendered by some careless swain,
Or swelling Neptune lawless inroads made
And to their cell of store his flood conveyed;
The commonwealth, broke-up, distracted go
And in wild haste their loaded mates o'erthrow:
Even so our scattered guests confusedly meet,
With boiled, baked, roast, all justling in the street;
Dejected all and ruefully dismayed,
For shekel, without treat or treason, paid.

Sedition's dark eclipse now fainter shows,
More bright each hour the royal planet grows,
Of force the clouds of envy to disperse
In kind conjunction of assisting stars:

Here, labouring Muse ! those glorious chiefs relate
That turned the doubtful scale of David's fate ;
The rest of that illustrious band rehearse,
Immortalized in laurelled Asaph's verse.
Hard task ; yet will not I thy flight recall ;
View heaven, and then enjoy thy glorious fall.

First, write Bezaliel whose illustrious name
Forestals our praise, and gives his poet fame
The Kenites' rocky province his command,
A barren limb of fertile Canaan's land ;
Which for its generous natives yet could be
Held worthy such a President as he.
Bezaliel with each grace and virtue fraught,
Serene his looks, serene his life and thought,
On whom so largely Nature heaped her store,
There scarce remained for arts to give him more.
To aid the Crown and State his greatest zeal,
His second care that service to conceal ;
Of dues observant, firm in every trust,
And to the needy always more than just ;
Who truth from specious falsehood can divide,
Has all the gownsmen's skill without their pride ;
Thus, crowned with worth from heights of honour won,
See all his glories copied in his son,
Whose forward fame should every Muse engage,
Whose youth boasts skill denied to others' age.
Men, manners, language, books of noblest kind
Already are the conquest of his mind.
Whose loyalty before its date was prime,
Nor waited the dull course of rolling time :
The monster faction early he dismayed,
And David's cause long since confessed his aid.

Brave Abdael o'er the Prophets' school was placed ;
Abdael, with all his father's virtue graced ;
A hero who, while stars looked wondering down,
Without one Hebrew's blood restored the crown,
That praise was his ; what therefore did remain
For following chiefs but boldly to maintain

That crown restored ? And in this rank to fame
Brave Abdael with the first a place must claim.
Proceed, illustrious happy chief, proceed,
Foreseize the garlands for thy brow decreed,
While the inspired tribe attend with noblest strain
To register the glories thou shalt gain :
For sure the dew shall Gilboah's hills forsake
And Jordan mix his stream with Sodom's lake,
Or seas retired their street stores disclose
And to the sun their scaly brood expose,
Or swelled above the cliffs their billows raise,
Before the Muses leave their parton's praise.

Eliab our next labour does invite,
And hard the task to do Eliab right.
Long with the royal wonderer he roved
And firm in all the turns of fortune proved.
Such ancient service and desert so large
Well claimed the royal household for his charge.
His age with only one mild heiress blest,
In all the bloom of smiling nature drest ;
And blest again to see his flower allied
To David's stock, and made young Othniel's bride !
The bright restorer of his father's youth,
Devoted to a son's and subject's truth :
Resolved to bear that prize of duty home,
So bravely sought, while sought by Absalom.
Ah, Prince ! the illustrious planet of thy birth
And thy more powerful virtue guard thy worth,
May no Achitophel thy ruin boast !
Israel too much in one such wreck has lost.

Even envy must consent to Helon's worth,
Whose soul, though Egypt glories in his birth,
Could for our captive ark its zeal retain
And Pharaoh's altars in their pomp disdain :
To slight his gods was small ; with nobler pride
He all the allurements of his court defied,
Whom profit nor example could betray,
But Israel's friend, and true to David's sway.

What acts of favour in his province fall
On merit he confers, and freely all.

Our list of nobles next let Amri grace,
Whose merits claimed the Abbethdin's high place ;
Who with a loyalty that did excel
Brought all the endowments of Achitophel.
Sincere was Amri, and not only knew,
But Israel's into practice drew ;
Our laws that did a boundless ocean seem
Were coasted all and fathomed all by him.
No Rabbin speaks like him their mysticsense,
So just, and with such charms of eloquence ;
To whom the double blessing does belong,
With Mose's inspiration Aaron's tongue.

Than Sheva none more loyal zeal have shown,
Wakeful as Judah's lion for the crown,
Who for that cause still combats in his age
For which his youth danger did engage.
In vain our factious priests the cant revive ;
In vain seditious scribes with lible strive
To inflame the crowd, while he with watchful eye
Observes, and shoots their treasons as they fly ;
Their weekly frauds his keen replies detect ;
He undeceives more fast than they infect.
So Moses, when the pest on legions preyed,
Advanced his signal, and the plague was stayed.

Once more, my fainting Muse, thy pinions try,
And strength's exhausted store let love supply.
What tribute, Asaph, shall we render thee
We'll crown thee with a wreath from thy own tree !
Thy laurel grove no envy's flash can blast ;
The song of Asaph shall for ever last !
With wonder late posterity shall dwell
On Absalom and false Achitophel :
Thy strains shall be our slumbering prophets' dream,
And, when our Sion virgins sing their theme,
Our jubilees shall with thy verse be graced ;
The song of Asaph shall for ever last !

How fierce his satire loosed, restrained, how tame,
How tender of the offending young man's fame !
How well his worth and brave adventures styled ;
Just to his virtues, to his error mild.
No page thine that fears the strictest view,
But teems with just reproof or praise as due ;
Not Eden could a fairer prospect yield,
All Paradise without one barren field :
Whose wit the censure of his foes has past,
The song of Asaph shall for ever last !
What praise for such rich strains shall we allow ?
What just rewards the grateful crown bestow ?
While bees in flowers rejoice, and flowers in dew,
While stars and fountains to their course are true,
While Judah's throne and Sion's rock stand fast,
The song of Asaph and the fame shall last.

Still Hebron's honoured happy soil retains
Our royal hero's beauteous dear remains :
Who now sails off, with winds nor wishes slack,
To bring his sufferings' bright companion back.
But ere such transport can our sense employ,
A bitter grief must poison half our joy ;
Nor can our coasts restored those blessings see
Without a bribe to envious destiny !
Curst Sodom's doom for ever fix the tide,
Where, by inglorious chance, the valiant died.
Give not insulting Askalon to know,
Not let Gath's daughters triumph in our woe !
No sailor with the news swell Egypt's pride
By what inglorious fate our valiant died !
Weep, Arnon ! Jordan, weep thy fountain's dry.
While Sion's rock dissolves for a supply.
Calm were the elements, night's silence deep,
The waves scarce murmuring, and the winds asleep ;
Yet fate for ruin takes so still an hour,
And treacherous sands the princely bark devour ;
Then death unworthy seized a generous race,
To virtue's scandal and the stars' disgrace !
Oh ! had the indulgent powers vouchsafed to yield,

Instead of faithless shelves, a listed field;
A listed field of Heaven's and David's foes,
Fierce as the troops that did his youth oppose,
Each life had on his slaughtered heap retired,
Not tamely, and unconquering thus expired.
But Destiny is now their only foe,
And dying, even o'er that they triumph too;
With loud last breaths their master's scape applaud,
Of whom kind force could scarce the fates defraud;
Who for such followers lost (O matchless mind!)
At his own safety now almost repined!
Say, royal sir, by all your fame in arms,
Your praise in peace, and by Urania's charms.
If all your sufferings past so nearly prest,
Or pierced with half so painful grief your breast?
Thus some diviner Muse her hero forms,
Not soothed with soft delights, but tost in storms,
Nor stretched on roses in the myrtle grove,
Nor crowns his days with mirth, his nights with love;
But far removed in thundering camps is found,
His slumbers short, his bed the herbless ground;
In tasks of danger always seen the first,
Feeds from the hedge and slakes with ice his thirst.
Long must his patience strive with Fortune's rage,
And long opposing gods themselves engage;
Must see his country flame, his friends destroyed,
Before the promised empire be enjoyed:
Such toil of fate must build a man of fame,
And such to Israel's crown the godlike David came.

What sudden beams dispel the clouds so fast
Whose drenching rains laid all our vineyards waste?
The spring so far behind her course delayed
On the instant is in all her bloom arrayed;
The winds breathe low, the element serene,
Yet mark! what motion in the waves is seen
Thronging and busy as Hyblœan swarms
Or straggled soldiers summoned to their arms!
See where the princely bark in loosest pride,
With all her guardian fleet, adorns the tide!

High on her deck the royal lovers stand,
Our crimes to pardon ere they touched our land.
Welcome to Israel and to David's breast !
Here all your toils, here all your sufferings rest.

This years did Ziloah rule Jerusalem.
And boldly all sedition's surges stem,
Howe'er encumbered with a viler pair
Than Ziph or Shimei, to assist the chair ;
Yet Ziloah's loyal labours so prevailed
That faction at the next election falied,
When even the common cry did justice sound,
And merit by the multitude was crowned :
With David then was Israel's peace restored,
Crowds mourned their error and obeyed their lord.

KEY TO ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

Following is the Key to the names in the allegory *Absalom and Achitophel*. It was Tonson, Dryden's publisher, who gave the Key to this poem in 1716 :

Aaron's Race	... ...	The Clergy
Abbethdin	... ...	Lord Chancellor
Absalom	... ...	Duke of Monmouth
Achitophel	... ...	Earl of Shaftesbury
Adriel	... ...	Earl of Musgrave
Agag	... ...	Sir Edmund B. Godfrey
Amiel	... ...	Mr. (afterwards Sir Edward) Seymour
Annabel	... ...	Duchess of Monmouth
Balaam	... ...	Earl of Huntingdon
Barzillai	... ...	Duke of Ormond
Bathsheba	... ...	Duchess of Portsmouth
Caleb	... ...	Lord Grey of Wark
Corah	... ...	Titus Oates
David	... ...	King Charles II
Egypt	... ...	France
Ethnic Plot	... ...	Popish Plot
Hebrew Priests	... ...	Church of England Clergymen
Hebron	... ...	Scotland
Ishbosheth	... ...	Richard Cromwell
Israel	... ...	England
Issachar	... ...	Thomas Thynne of Longleat
Jebusites	... ...	Papists
Jerusalem	... ...	London
Jewish Robbins	... ...	Doctors of the Church of England
Jonas	... ...	Sir William Jones
Jordam	... ...	The English Seas or the Irish Channel

Jotham	Marquis of Halifax
Levites	The Presbyterian Ministers
Michal	Queen Catherine
Nadab	Lord Howard of Escrick
Pharaoh	Louis XIV, King of France
Sagan of Jerusalem ...	Bishop of London
Sanhedrim	Parliament
Saul	Oliver Cromwell
Shimei	Slingsby Bethel
Sion	London
Solymean Rout	The London rabble
Tyre	Holland
Uzza	John Hall, commonly called Jack Hall
Western Dome	Westminster Abbey
Zadoc	Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury
Zacken	Member of Parliament
Ziloa	Sir John Moor
Zimri	Duke of Buckingham

NOTES

FIRST PART OF ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

Preface

As we have noted elsewhere most of the Restoration prose is written in the form of prefaces, dedications and dialogues. Dryden as the best representative of his times follows the literary conventions of his age and gives us valuable literary criticism. In this preface, Dryden justifies the design of the poem and gives us valuable observations on satire and his handling of it.

Si propius etc. : One kind will attract you more, if you stand nearer to it. (Horace , *Ars Poetica* 361-2 ; tr. D F. S. Thomson).

P. 1, *l.* 3. **Design** : The allegorical and satirical form of the poem.

l. 5. **Whig and Tory** : *Whig* is a word of Scotch origin, *Tory* of Irish. Roger North tells us that the term *Whig* has been employed in 1648 as a political designation in Scotland. Tories, according to Roger North, were 'The most despicable savages among the wild Irish'. *Whig* and *Tory* are really terms of abuse and gradually acquired distinct political status. The political passions of the state ran high leading to two distinct political groupings. Irishmen, as Roman Catholics, favoured the Duke of York, and his followers came to be known as Tories. The opponents of the court were Whigs.

l. 7. **Fanatic Church** : Protestant Church.

l. 8. **The Papist** : Roman Catholics.

l. 9. **The lewd** : the indecent people.

l. 10. **Deuteronomy** : The fifth book of the Old Testament (the Bible).

l. 11. **Anti-Bromingham** : Birmingham was a Whig and became notorious for the production of counterfeit coins. W. D. Christie quotes Roger North as saying that the Tories nicknamed their adversaries 'Birmingham Protestants, alluding to the false groats struck at that place'.

P. 1, *l.* 13—P. 2, *l*, 1. **Yet if a poem have a genius ..... against his will** : This is an important statement which tells that if a poem have genius, its merit will be recognised someday or the other. Dryden further adds that the primary quality of good verse is sweetness and that the great satirist or humorist tickles while he hurts. This is a quality to be found in great humorists like Chaucer and Dickens.

l. 3. **Extorted** : got by force or threats.

l. 7. **Rebating** : an obsolete word which means blunting. W. D. Christie quotes *Palamon and Arcite*, Bk. ii. *l.* 502 ; Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure,* Act I, Sc. iv ; Oldham, *Satire* III.

ll. 11-12. **I can write......gently** : That Dryden can write severely can be seen in *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe.* These are two pungent personal satires Dryden was provoked to write for the reasons cited in the *Introduction.*

ll. 12-15. **I have but laughed their crimes** : *Cf. Leigh Hunt's observation on Dryden* : "He could bestow commendation on the offender ; and was always ready to break off into some enthusiastic strain of verse or reflection".

l. 13. **Declaimed** : inveigled passionately.

ll. 14-15. **Taxed their crimes** : censured.

l. 18. **Commonwealth's-men** : republicans, *i.e.*, Whigs.

l. 20. **Unconscionable** : unreasonably. first Dryden published the poem anonymously.

ll. 26-27. **The violent......character of Absalom** : In portraying the character of Absalom (Duke of Monmouth) Dryden was placed in a very awkward position. He had to deal with him keeping in view the sensitiveness of the situation. David (Charles II) loved him, and so Dryden could not condemn him outright. Nor could he wholeheartedly praise him. Throughout the poem Dryden carefully abstains from censuring Absalom. He throws the whole blame on Achitophel (Earl of Shaftesbury) who made Absalom his tool. Dryden writes in his *Preface* : "But since the most excellent natures are always the most easy and, as being such, are the soonest perverted by ill counsels, especially when baited with fame and glory, it is no more a wonder that he withstood not the temptations of Achitophel than it was for Adam not to have resisted the two devils, the serpent and the woman. The conclusion of the story I purposely forebore to prosecute, because I could not obtain from myself to show Absalom unfortunate". Dryden faced with such a situation nurses his finer sentiments by saying, "Were I the inventor, who am only the historian, I should certainly conclude the piece with the reconcilement of Absalom to David".

l. 30. **Extenuate** : make a wrong seem less by finding a partial excuse.

palliate : soften.

P. 3. *l.* 14. **Perverted by ill counsels** : refers to Shaftesbury tempting Absalom.

l. 18. **Composure** : reconcilement. W. D. Christie says that Dryden uses *Composure* for 'composition' in his poem to Sir Robert Howard :

> "So in your verse a native sweetness dwells
> Which shames composure and its art excels."

l. 21. **To hope with Origen** : Origines Adamantius, born *circa* A.D. 186, died A. D. 253 (?) was the Father of the Church. He propounded the doctrine that all guilty

souls will one day be restored. Origen seems to have excluded the devil from the operations of this doctrine. Dryden's "hope" is not, however, shared by Origen.

l. 25. **Vicegerent** : deputy.

ll. 27-28. **The true end......correction** : *Cf. A Discourse concerning the Origin and Progress of Satire* (1693) : "Satire is of the nature of moral philosophy as being instructive ......" Dryden's view of the object of satire. Cf. Pope ; *Essay on Satire*, Pt. I.

l. 31. **Chirurgeon** : An obsolete word meaning 'surgeon'.

P. 4, *l.* 1. **Ense rescindendum** : See Ovid, *Met.* i. 191.

THE POEM

Before going through the notes of the poem, the reader's attention is invited to the *Key to Absalom and Achitophel* on pp. 73-74.

ll. 1-10. **In pious times... ..through the land** : In pious times, moral values were held high in esteem. Polygamy was considered to be a sin. But the Restoration age was a licentious one. King Charles II had many illegitimate children, chief among them being the Duke of Monmouth who figures in this poem as Absalom. Mr. F. N. Lees of the Manchester University has observed : "The poem begins with a swing, a good-humoured satiric irony accompanying the placing of Charles II (David) within the old Dispensation. The verse moving with conversational ease while the interest is engaged by the series of preparatory clauses in the paragraph, alliteration working to promote significant emphasis, the diction plain yet with body, and the metre really *used* in the expression. One notices how the repeated 'v' gives point to 'variously', and how the rhythmic plunge into 'scattered' animates the word and thence the line, and strengthens the end of the paragraph".

l. 5. **Israel's monarch** : England's King, Charles II. Charles had been compared to David in *Astrea Redux.* "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil my will". (Acts XIII. 22).

ll. 11-18. Charles II married Catherine of Braganza. There was no issue by her. But he had several illegitimate sons of whom Absalom (Duke of Monmouth) was the chief.

l. 11. **Michal** : Catherine of Braganza, Charles's Queen.

l. 12. **A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care** : By 1679, Charles had been married to Catherine of Braganza for seventeen long years, but he had no issue by her.

l. 13. **Several mothers** : Several mistresses like Lucy Walters, the Duchess of Cleveland, the Duchess of Portsmouth, Nell Gwynn, Mary Davis, etc.

l. 18. **No true succession could their seed attend** : Since Charles had all illegitimate children, none of them had the right of succession. The whole poem centres round the theme of succession.

ll. 19-42. Description of Absalom.

l. 20. **Absalom** : So spelt because of, as Collins would say, *metri gratia*. Absalom is Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles by Lucy Walters.

l. 21. **Conscious destiny** : The Duke of Monmouth was destined to be great and he was conscious of it.

l. 23. **Early in foreign fields** : In 1672 and in 1673, Monmouth served as a volunteer in King Louis XIV's army against the Dutch. In 1678, he was in command of the British troops in coalition with the Dutch against the French.

l. 24. **Kings and states allied to Israel's crown** : Holland and France, Monmouth had commanded the English troops serving under the French against the Dutch in 1672-73. In 1678, serving under the Dutch, he fought against the French. He gained distinction at both the fronts.

l 25. **Remove** : forget.

l. 26. **As he were** : as if he were.

l. 29. **Accompanied with grace** : Hamilton in his *Memoirs* says, "His (Duke of Monmouth's) figure and the exterior graces of his form were such that nature perhaps never framed anything more complete. His face was eminently

handsome, and yet it was a manly face, neither inanimate nor effeminate".

l. 30. **And Paradise was opened in his face :** *Cf.* Pope,

"And Paradise open'd on the wild".

—*Eloisa to Abelard*, 133.

l. 34. **Charming Annabel :** Anne Scott, Countess of Buccleuch, was married to Duke of Monmouth in 1663. The Duchess of Monmouth was patron and friend of Dryden. Dryden dedicated his play *The Indian Emperor* to her. The Duchess's charms have been celebrated both by Madame Dunois and Evelyn. Dryden calls her "the patroness of my unworthy poetry".

l. 39. **And Amnon's murder** : As Churton Collins says, "This allusion has never been satisfactorily explained". W. D. Christie observes, "This is probably a reference to an attack, which Monmouth was believed to have instigated, on Sir John Coventry in 1670, by some officers and men of Monmouth's troops of horseguards, in revenge for a sarcasm uttered in the House of Commons about the King's armours. Coventry's nose was slit with a penknife. The House of Commons took up the affair very warmly, and a new Act was passed, making it a capital felony to wound with intention to maim or to disfigure, which went by the name of the Coventry Act. There was indeed no murder in this case, but Dryden probably desired to avoid precise identification." John Churton Collins quotes among others, Andrew Marvell's letter of Feb. 28th, 1671 : "On Saturday night last, or rather Sunday morning at two o'clock, some persons reported to be of great quality, together with other gentlemen, set upon the watch and killed a poor beadle praying for his life upon his knees, with many wounds."

l. 42. **Sion** : London.

l. 43. **Sincerely** : 'without alloy', purely.

l. 45. **The Jews** : The Israelities. Here it is the English.

ll. **45-46.** The first line shows, Mr. F. N. Lees pertinently observes, "a controll of and freedom within the couplet which should disprove any idea that variety is in the keeping of a single caesural pause".

l. 50. **God-Smiths** : Note the light scorn which 'God-smiths' suggests 'Goldsmiths'.

l. 51. **Adam-wits** : Wits having all the freedom of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

ll. 52-56. This is an allusion to the 'state of Nature', which Hobbes and others supposed to exist before the States and Commonwealths were founded.

l. 57. **Saul** : Oliver Cromwell.

l. 58. **Foolish Ishbosheth** : Richard Cromwell, Oliver's son, succeeded to the Protectorship on Oliver's death. He was forced to resign when he dissolved Parliament in April 22nd, 1659. This event has paved the way for the return of Charles II from exile.

l. 59. **Hebron** : It may mean Scotland since at that time he had already been crowned King of Scotland. It may also mean Brussels since Charles was residing when he received the invitation to return to England.

ll. 61-66. Dryden seems to discredit the Whigs and their unsound political theories and their disloyalty to their King.

l. 65. **State** : a republic.

l. 71. **Looking backward with a wise affright** : England was plunged into a civil war when Charles I was The people of England had bitter experiences of the after-effects of the war.

l. 72. **Seams .....to the sight** : the bitter consequences of the war.

l. 75. **Thus qualified** : having these qualities.

l. 85. **Jerusalem** : London.

l. 86. **Jebusites** : Roman Catholics.

l. 87. John Churton Collins says, "This half-finished line is no doubt in imitation of Virgil's hemistichs. Cowley is guilty of the same affectation in his *Davideis*, and so also are Oldham in his *Satires on the Jesuits* and Young in his *Night Thoughts*".

l. 88. **The chosen people** : Protestants.

ll. 90-91. The Jebusites were hated as the enemies of God.

l. 94. **Deprived of all command** : alludes to the numerous statutes promulgated for the suppression of popery.

l. 94-97. These lines describe the hardships the Roman Catholics were put to as a result of the religious controversies of the time, the disputes between the Catholics and Anglicans.

l. 97. **Their gods disgraced, and burnt like common wood** : an allusion to the wholesale destruction of images and relics at the Reformation.

l. 98. **Heathen priesthood** : Roman Catholic priests.

l. 101. **Pedigree** : ancient descent.

l. 104. **The Jewish Rabbins** : The Protestant Divines.

l. 108. **That Plot** : the Popish Plot (1678) of Titus Oates and his accomplices. England began to centre on the question of succession. Consequently two great parties were formed. The Whigs insisted on the exclusion of James, brother of Charles II, from the right of succession, on the ground of his religion. The second party, the Tories supported the claim of James, Duke of York. To inflame the sentiments of the people on this question Titus Oates spread lies against the Papists.

l. 111. **With oaths affirmed, with dying vows denied** : Affirmed on oath by Oates and Bedloe, denied by Coleman, Ireland, Grove and Pickering.

l. 112. **Weighed or winnowed** : duly examined.

l. 114. **Some truth there was, but dashed and brewd with lies** : Oates's lies were not entirely baseless. There was some slight truth, but that truth was hopelessly maimed with lies.

l. 114. **Dashed** : to disturb by throwing in. Churton Collins traces this image to pot boiling.

l. 117. **Believing nothing or believing all** : Compare the lines on the Popish Plot in *The Hind and the Panther* :

"Some specious reasons for those wrong were found ;
The dire Magicians threw their mists around,
And wise men walked as on enchanted ground''.

l. 118. **Egyptian rites** : Egypt in this poem stands for France, and the Egyptian rites are the Roman Catholic rites prevailing then in France. Churton Collins comments : "These lines are a coarse sneer at the doctrine of transubstantiation which was afterwards to find so powerful and eloquent an apologist in Dryden".

l. 120. **Savoury** : appetizing taste, agreeable.

l. 128. **Hebrew priests** : Protestant clergy. "This satire on the Protestant clergy is as severe as that against the Roman Catholics.'' (Churton Collins).

ll. 128-129. As Prof. Iyengar puts it, "The priests of the Church of England regretted the re-conversion of Englishman to Roman Catholicism, because it diminished their income''.

l. 130. **Some thought they God's anointed meant to slay** : In April 1678 it was alleged that Pickering, Groves and Ireland tried to assassinate the King. The Catholics were bitterly accused in this connection.

l. 134. **Want of common sense** : on the part of Titus Oates and his accomplices. Had it not been for this unfortunate thing the Whigs would have carried on their plans.

ll. 137-139. The Popish Plot created a terrible sensation bringing the political passions into white heat of intensity. People ran into a sort of frenzy and the 'false Achitophel' (Earl of Shaftesbury) took advantage of the occasion by organising his opposition party consisting of all disgruntled souls.

l. 140. **Several factions** : Shaftesbury brought together all sorts of disgruntled factions and thus organised his opposition party.

l. 142. **Some by their friend** : Collins says that the references in these lines appear to have special relation (*a*) to the Earl of Huntingdon and Lord Grey of Wark, (*b*) to the Duke of Buckingham, and (*c*) to Shaftesbury.

l. 145. **Impenitence** : obduracy.

ll. 150-203. Description of Achitophel. Dryden achieves most in his individual character-sketches. This is a quality recognised by many critics of Dryden. F.N. Lees observes : "Giving this terse sketch the added life and increased value is its acknowledgement of the powers of Shaftesbury, in admiration for them, and, even so early in the portrait, the beginnings of a distinct personal feeling of regret at the perversion and waste of talents, particularly when they are turned to the upsetting of that 'commoner quiet' which, as he says in *Religio Laici*, is 'mankind's concern'."

l. 150. **Achitophel** : Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, was the eldest son of Sir John Cooper. He had occupied responsible positions in Charles's dispensation. On the question of succession, he came into sharp conflict with the King and organised a large opposition. He was consequently tried for high treason. A few days before the trial, the present poem was published to influence public

opinion. For an elaborate attack on Shaftesbury, Dryden's *The Medal* should be read.

l. 152. **Close designs and crooked counsels fit**: Shaftesbury came into sharp conflict with the Duke of York. Charles II stood in favour of his brother. Shaftesbury organised a large opposition with all the resources at his command.

l. 153. **Bold**: "The epithet may be applied with propriety to the general daring of Shaftesbury's designs, but cautious timidity was what, through life, most distinguished him personally.'' (Collins)

ll. 152-155. Note the precision of language, the energy, the capability of the words.

ll. 156-8. Prof. Verral comments, "In this description of Achitophel, Dryden is thinking of the Aristotelian theory in which soul represents form and body represents matter ......What Dryden intends to convey is that in Shaftesbury there was too much 'form' for the 'matter'." W.D. Christie informs us that a correspendent of *Notes and Queries*, Dec. 17, 1850 (Vol, i. p. 468), has supplied the two following quotations in illustration of this triplet on Shaftesbury's fiery soul fretting his pigmy body and o'er-informing the tenement of clay. "He (the Duke of Alva) was one of a lean body and visage, as if his eager soul, biting for anger at the clay of his body, desired to fret a passage through it." (Fuller's Profane State.)

"The purest soul that e'er was sent
Into a cleyey tenement''

—Carew.

ll. 156-158. T. S. Eliot remarks, "These lines are not merely magnificent tribute. They create the object which they contemplate''.

l. 157. **Pigmy body**: Shaftesbury's body is said to be of a small stature. Cf. Mulgrave's *Essay on Satire*:

"His legs are crippled, and his body shakes
Yet his bold mind that all this bustle makes,
No pity of its poor companion takes."

l. 158. **Over-information** : over-moulded.

The tenement of clay : the body. Shaftesbury was a man of sickly constitution.

ll. 159-162. Here we have Achitophel, the abstract intriguer.

ll. 163-64. Off-quoted lines which have passed into a proverb. 'wits' is here used into the primary sense for men of intelligence. This is the commonest sense in Dryden's poetry. Mr. H. Coombes considers it as a good example of a rhyme. "Dryden's aim in this celebrated couplet," he adds, "was to make a neat formulation of an interesting psychological 'truth'. He knew well enough the effectiveness of the rhyming couplet for such a purpose, and he produced in this one a deservedly admired and much quoted specimen." Cf. Shakespeare :

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.

A Midsummer Night's Dream,
V. i, 9-10.

l. 163. Cf. Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Nights Dream* where he says that the poet and the lunatic 'are of imagination compact.'

ll. 167-168. Cf. Dryden in *The Medal* :

"The working ferment of his active mind,
In his weak body's cask with pain confined,
Would burst the rotten vessel where 'tis pent,
But that it is rapt to give the treason vent."

l, 170. "**That unfeathered two-legged thing, a son** : a reference to Anthony Ashley Cooper, second Earl of

Shaftesbury. Cf. Plato's definition of man as a two-footed animal without wings.

l. 172. **Like anarchy** : Shaftesbury's son, the second Earl, was without character.

ll. 173-174. The alliteration in these lines, as Mark Van Doren has observed, "is corrosive in its contemptuousness".

l. 174. Cf. Milton's Satan.

l. 175. **The triple bond he broke** : Shaftesbury actively promoted war against Holland in March 1672 by breaking the Triple Alliance between England, Sweden, and Holland. Dryden repeats the accusation in *The Medal* :

> "Thus framed or ill, he loosed our triple hold—
> Advice unsafe, precipitous, and blod."

Christie contends that "this is a flagrant example of Dryden's reckless inconsistency and unscrupulousness in attack".

l. 177, **Foreign Yoke** : refers to the secret alliance of Charles II with King Louis XIV of France.

l. 179. **All-atoning** : all-reconciling.

ll. 180-191. These lines were added in the second edition of the poem probably to soften the severity of the attack on Shaftesbury. W. D. Christie writes : "A very absurd story has been told, that these lines containing high praise of Shaftesbury as a Judge, were added by Dryden in gratitude for the gift of a nomination to the Charterhouse School for his third son, Erasmus, by Shaftesbury, after the publication of Absalom and Achitophel. The story was first published in Kippis's edition of the Biographia Brittannica, published in 1779. Malone took great pains to refute this very improbable story............ The story is simply impossible. Immediately after the publication of Absalom and Achitophel, Shaftesbury could not have abased himself by offering a favour to Dryden even if Dryden were likely to accept it... After all the idea of praising Shaftesbury as a judge is in the lines 192-9,

which were in the first edition. Why so much praise was added in the second edition may be variously explained. Dryden may have thought that further explanation was necessary for connecting the passage beginning in line 192.

'Oh! had he been content to serve the crown.'

with the preceding denunciation of Shaftesbury as a politician. Or he may have thought that higher praise of him as a judge might increase by contrast the effect of his abuse of the statesman or, as Shaftesbury had in the interval been acquitted of the charge of high treason and had triumphed over his enemies, Dryden may have wished to say something conciliatory for one whom he had so fiercely attacked, and who might now again become formidable." John Churton Collins agrees with Sir Walter Scott that the passages in which Dryden softens the severity of his satire, illustrate the poet's taste and judgment and "that tone of honorable and just feeling which distinguishes a true satire from a libellous lampoon."

l. 187. **The judge** : Shaftesbury was Lord-Chancellor in 1672-1673.

l. 188. **Abethdin** : Lord-Chancellor.

ll. 192-195. Dryden regrets the perversion and waste of talents on the part of Shaftesbury. These lines are a record of Dryden's humanizing sense of regret.

l. 193. **The gown** : Shaftesbury was a judge and his fame as a judge must be conceded.

l. 194. **Rankness** : fertility.

l. 195. **Cockle** : plant growing in corn. See *Book of Job*, xxxi. 40.

ll. 196-197. Christie interprets these lines thus: "David would then have addressed a song to Achitophel instead of a lament to Heaven."

l. 197. **Wanted** : 'to be without'.

l. 198-199. Lod Macaulay traces the origin of this couplet to the frontispiece of Knolles' *History of the Turks* :

"Greatness on goodness loves to slide, not stand,
And leaves for Fortune's ice Virtue's firm land."

l. 204. **Manifest of crimes** : clearly convicted of, Cf. Dryden's *Palamon and Arcite*, Bk. i. 263.

l. 205. **Bold defiance** : Dalrymple in his *Memoirs* wrote : "The Cabal took the same sudden turn with the King, Shaftesbury observing that 'the prince who forsook himself deserved to be forsaken.' He then put himself at the head of the opposition to the court.''

l. 206. **Help up ....cause** : Shaftesbury as the leader of the opposition championed vigorously the popular cause.

ll. 208-209. We cannot charge Shaftesbury definitely of 'making circumstances' of the alleged Popish Plot. But it is certain that he made use of it.

l. 213. **Prove the King himself a Jebusite** : Charles II was in some confidential quarters known to have declared himself a Roman Catholic in 1669. As Christie points out, Shaftesbury invented no calumny. He only told the truth:

l. 215. **Easy** : easily disposed.

ll. 217-218. The political moods of the people are so changing that they are disposed to change their Lord every twenty years.

l. 221. **Absalon** : so spelt *metri gratia*.

ll. 222-227. These lines pave the way for the great temptation scene. Prof. Verrall comments : "The language of this passage is simplicity and plainness itself ; all the words are in correct use. Hence the effect of sneers produced by the two words of Greek derivation, 'politicians' and 'democracy'."

l. 222. **Not that he wished** : Dryden represents Shaftesbury as a pure demagogue.''

l. 227. Cf. Dryden in *The Hind and Panther* :

"It is decreed we must be drained, I see,
Down to the dregs of a democracy."

ll. 230-302. Achitophel's famous speech in the Great Temptation scene. Critics have drawn parallel between Achitophel's seduction of Absalom and Satan's temptation of Eve. Churton Collins observes : "The whole of this passage to line 272 is noble illustration of Dryden's magnificient rhetoric, of that union of sweetness with strength, of massiveness with flexibility, which distinguishes his rhythm, of the vigour, incisiveness, and power of his style." It is this quality of rhetoric that made Mark Van Doren pronounce, "Dryden led the grand rhetorical march of English Poetry." Pope wrote,

"Dryden taught to join
The varying verse, the full resounding line,
The long majestic march and energy divine."

l. 230. **Nativity** : birth.

l. 240. **Three Saviour, Thee** : Imitation of Latin. Cf. Milton (*Lycidas*, 39).

ll. 242-243. A tumultuous welcome was accorded to the Duke of Monmouth when he returned to England in 1679.

ll. 244-247. Shaftesbury, a very shrewd politician he is, is slowly injecting Monmouth the seeds of ambition.

l. 251. **Or.........or** : a poetical construction.

ll. 252-259. A similar observation is to be found in *Julius Caesar* and Chapman. Cf. Brutus :

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries".

Cf. also Chapman is *Bussy D' Ambois :*

"There is a deep nick in time's restless wheel
For each man's god, when which nick comes, it strikes".

l. 261. **Spreads her locks** : A reference to the ancient picture of opportunity who has a forelock but is bald behind.

l. 262. **From whose loins you spring** : Duke of Monmouth is the illegitimate child of Charles II and Lucy Walters.

l. 264. **Gath** : Brussels.

l. 270. **Jordan's sand** : The grand reception of Charles II at Dover Beach.

ll. 270-272. Dryden's use of Triplets is a technical device.

l. 273. **Prince of Angels** : Satan.

l. 275. **One poor plot** : The Popish Plot.

l. 280. **Naked of Friends** : It is a Gallicism. Dryden is fond of such construction.

l. 281. **Pharaoh** : Louis XIV, King of France.

l. 302. Note the swelling rhythm, reminiscent of Milton.

l. 303. Dryden shifts the blame on Shaftesbury. The passage following this is Absalom's reply to Achitophel.

l. 310. **Angel's metal** : temper, courage, spirit, usually spelt as mettle.

l. 318. **Mankind's delight** : The phrase is echoes from Suetonius, who calls Vespasian 'amor ac deliciæ generis humani'.

l. 325. **Studious of our good** : disposed to do us good.

l. 328. **God is merciful** : Charles's mercy is no crime. God's beloved attribute is mercy. Charles is merciful. His mercy is therefore no crime.

l. 336. **Popularly mad** : mad after popularity.

l. 344. **Prevents** : anticipates. Monmouth's desires are satisfied before he asks for them.

l. 346. **Diadem** : ensign of royalty.

l. 347. **But there he paused** : Dryden gives Absalom's reply a dramatic touch.

l. 353. **His brother** : James, Duke of York.

ll. 353-360. Cf. Dryden's portrayal of the character of James in *Duke of Guise*. Compare also Dryden's character of James in *The Hind and the Panther*.

l. 354. **Native right** : right of succession.

l. 361. **Rapine** : express my regret.

ll. 361-362. When there is already the lawful heir to the throne why should I unnecessarily contend for it ?

l. 369. **Niggard birth** : illegitimacy of Monmouth's birth.

l. 372. Absalom clinches the argument with a neat and bold assertion. He speaks, as it were, with a clean conscience.

l. 373. **Hell's dire agent** : Shaftesbury is pictured here as Satan. This evil genius found the Duke of Monmouth in such a vacillating situation. Observe how the line

begins and compare Milton's "Him the Almighty hurled him down". This is one of the epic devices of sentence-construction, which Dryden makes use of.

l. 374. **Fainting virtue** : There is a struggle going on between Virtue and Temptation ; and Monmouth fell a victim to the latter.

l. 375. **Pours fresh forces in** : Makes further persuasion.

ll. 376-474. Achitophel's second speech.

l. 381. **Contemn** : scornfully regard.

l. 390. **Sanhedrin** : Parliament.

l. 391. **Shekel** : coin.

l. 393. **Play** : assail.

l. 401. **The next successor** : James, Duke of York.

l. 402. Refers to Shaftesbury's intrigues for passing the Exclusion Bill.

l. 404. "Shaftesbury had persuaded the House of Commons to accept his proposal for the Exclusion of the Catholic Duke of York from the throne."

ll. 409-410. If the King Charles II does not assert your title to the throne, then the people have right to make kings of their own.

l. 411. **Empire** : Here it means executive authority. Executive authority.

l. 417. **Saul** : Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector.

l. 418. "The republic which acknowledged God alone for their King, but which dispossessed by Cromwell (Saul)." (Collins).

l. 419. **Piety** : affection.

l. 425. **Fond** : foolish.

l. 434. Shaftesbury gradually convinces Monmouth.

l. 436. Christie notes : "The line was changed by Derrick so as to make a question :

'Is't after God's own heart to cheat his heir ?'

and Derrick's change has been adopted by succeeding editors, including Scott. Dryden makes Achitophel assert it to be 'after God's own heart to cheat his heir' *i.e.*, to deprive the Duke of York of his succession. This is intended for the assertion of a wicked counsellor. Derrick's change spoils the sense."

l. 437. **His brother** : James II, Duke of York.

ll. 447-454. Cf. Dryden. *Sigismunda and Guiscardo*, 241, and *The Hind and Panther*, iii, 267-72. Dryden like all great epic writers makes use of epic similes.

l. 458. Dryden has plenty of such aphorisms.

l. 461. **Prevail yourself of** : take advantage of French language and literature.

l. 462. **Try your title** : Shaftesbury is goading Monmouth to seize the opportunity by the forelock.

l. 469-470. Charles fear to go back upon his earlier pronouncements on the question of succession. In his heart of hearts Charles wants Monmouth to succeed him. This is how Earl of Shaftesbury makes use of his argumentative powers to tilt the scales and trap Monmouth.

ll. 471-474. "Just as women, while pretending to frown, inwardly welcome a lover's attentions, so also Charles, while pretending to be loyal to James, really wants Monmouth to ascend the throne."

l. 478. **Absalom's mild nature suited best** : Absalom yields to Achitophel.

l. 480. **Not stained** : Dryden is treating Monmouth with great tenderness throughout.

l. 490 The alliteration, as Mark Van Doren observes, is simply derisive and pelting.

l. 492. **Malcontents** : the various factions which were dissatisfied with Charles.

l. 501. **To embroil the state** : to involve the state in a civil war.

l. 509. **Haranguers of the throng** : the mob orators of London.

l. 512. "Hating, not merely Charles personally but, the very institution of monarchy."

l. 513. **The Solymaean rout** : The mob of London.

l. 515. Not the alliteration.

l. 517. **Ethnic Plot** : Popish Plot.

l. 519. **Hot Levites** : the Presbyterian priests.

l. 522. **Theocracy** : Cf. *l.* 418

l. 525. **Aaron's race** : the clergy.

l. 529-530. The vowels and consonants are steeped in disdain.

l. 541. **Hydra** : a huge monster with many heads.

l. 544. **Zimri** : George Villiers (1628-87), the second Duke of Buckingham. Dryden declares the character of Zimri to be 'worth the whole poem'.

ll. 545-552. Dryden's Achitophel and Zimri have felicity and finish. Often seemed to be saying the last word about a man when actually he said almost nothing or only latticed him over with antithesis. Saintsbury observes,

"Dryden's figures are at once types and individuals. Zimri is at once Buckingham and the idle grand seigneur who plays at politics." Note also Dryden's sly humour in these character-sketches.

l. 563. **Laughed himself from court**: Churton Collins observes, "A reference to Buckingham's foolish plot against the King in 1667, in consequence of which he was obliged to conceal himself; but afterwards surrendering he was confined to the Tower, till the King moved by the mingled threats and entreaties of the Duchess of Cleveland, set him free."

l. 574. **Balaam**: The Earl of Huntingdon who was a voluble, fluent talker.

l. 574. **Cold Caleb**: Ford, Lord Grey of Wark.

l. 575. **Nadab**: Lord Howard of Escrick. He had been a prisoner in the Tower on account of accusations made by Fitzharris. Collins notes: "The informer Fitzharris had written a shameful libel against the court, was convicted of high treason, and to save his life, which was however forfeited, asserted that Lord Howard had instigated him to forge a document incriminating the Queen and the Duke of York. Howard was accordingly sent to the Tower where he published a declaration asserting his innocence, and this he is said to have confirmed by taking the sacrament in lamb's wool, *i.e.*, ale poured on roasted apples and sugar."

l. 581. **Bull-faced Jonas**: Sir William Jones, the Attorney-General who conducted the prosecutions of the Popish Plot. Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar refers the epithet "bull-faced" to Jones' disagreeable temper.

l. 585. **Shimei**: Slingsby Bethel, son of Sir Walter Bethel, was a notorious republican. Shimei is created by a brilliant comic use of a kind of bathos.

l. 595. **Vare**: wand or staff.

l. 596. **Loaded** : Note the physical and moral weight of the word.

l. 598. **Sons of Belial** : evil-minded people.

ll. 604-605. Shimei is portrayed here as a man of no fixed will.

ll. 614-615. Refers to a tract. *Interests of Princes and States*, published anonymously by Bethel.

l. 617. **Rechabite** : See *Book of Jeremiah*, xxxv, 1-6, "Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink to wine neither ye nor your sons for ever."

l. 618. **Shrieval** : belonging to the Sheriff.

l. 632. **Corah** : Titus Oates, one of Dryden's strikingly few reminders of Chaucer. "In the description of Corah, to aid in effect of sheer contemptibility, Dryden employs a direct insulting language—though wittily embodied in a play of word and idea—and finally drops to rough physical description."

ll. 633-635. "An allusion to the serpent of brass made by Moses, and 'set upon a pole' by God's command, to save the Israelites from the fiery serpents which God sent for punishment." (Christie). See *Numbers* xxi, 6-9.

l. 636. **Though his birth were base** : Titus Oates was the son of a weaver.

l. 643. **Stephen** : was the first Christian martyr.

l. 644. **Ours was a Levite** : Titus was a clergyman.

l. 646. **Sunk were his eyes** : see North's *Examen*, p. 225, and Macaulay's *Hist*. i. p. 227.

l. 649. **A church vermillion and a Moses' face** : "The rubicund look of a jolly churchman, and a shining face

supposed to be like that of Moses, when he came down from the Mount" (W. D. Christie). See *Exodus*, xxxiv. 29-35.

l. 658. **Rabbinical degree** : Titus Oates styled himself as Doctor of Divinity from the University of Salamanca.

l. 665. **Apocryphal** : fictitious.

ll. 669-671. Corah never liked others to question the validity of his words.

l. 676. **Agag's murder** : Sir Edmund Godfrey was the magistrate before whom Oates had deposed on oath his story of the Popish Plot. Sir Edmund was soon found in a ditch murdered. See I Samuel xv., for Samuel's reproaches to Saul for disobeying the Lord's command and sparing Agag.

l. 680. **predicament** : situation or condition.

l. 683. **Deluded Absalom** : Absalom was completely trapped and made a scapegoat of Achitophel.

l. 697. **Hybla drops** : Mount Hybla in Sicily was famous for honey.

l. 700. **A banished man** : Monmouth had been banished from England by the King in September, 1679. But he returned in November without permission. Thereupon he was deprived of all offices.

l. 705 **Tyrus** : Holland.

l. 710. **Bathsheba** : the Duchess of Portsmouth.

ll. 723-726. Absalom's popularity.

l. 729. Refers to Monmouth's tour in 1680.

l, 738. **Wise Issachar** : *Book of Genesis*, xliv. 14, represents Issachar as a strong ass. Issachar here is Thomas Thynne of Longlead, a very wealthy man, popularly known as 'Tom of Ten Thousand.' The epithet 'wise' is ironical.

l. 750. **Endangered by a brother and a wife :** Charles's life was endangered by a brother because James was a Roman Catholic. His life was equally endangered by a wife because the Queen had no children and so left none for the succession to the throne.

l. 753. The lines which follow, as Churton Collins points out, are a striking illustration of one of Dryden's distinguishing characteristics, his power of reasoning vigorously and cogently in verse.

l. 754. **Circumvented** : outwitted.

ll. 759-768. "According to Hobbes the State was based on a contract or covenant. Men, weary of the perpetual warfare and insecurity of the state of nature, covenanted together to surrender their right of governing themselves to a sovereign, or to a sovereign assembly. This covenant or contract was irrevocable, and the power thus transferred could not be resumed by those who gave it. Dryden and the Tories in general accepted this view. The Wihgs held that the transfer of power was only conditional, not absolute." (C. H. Firth).

ll. 785-786. Churton Collins interprets : "What standard or test has an unstable and disorderly multitude, which, if it has for a moment a common aim, wastes and exhausts itself all the faster".

l. 787. **Public lunacy :** rebellion.

l. 794. In the state of nature, Hobbes tells us, there can be 'no property, no mine and thine distinct : but only that to be every man's that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it.'

l. 800, **Innovation** : violent political change.

l. 804. **To touch our ark** : to touch the ark would mean disaster, for the ark is considered to be sacred among the Israelites.

l. 813. **Madness** : the rebellious attitude against the King.

l. 816. **Some let me name** : Drvden gives the list of those who were loyal to the King and the court.

l. 817. **Barzillai** : the Duke of Ormond who was one of Dryden's patrons. Carte mentions Dryden as one of his periodical dinner-guests. The Duke was one of the most devoted servants of Charles.

l. 820. **Beyond the Jordan's flood** : in foreign countries.

l. 823. James Butler, Duke of Ormond accompanied Charles II during his exile, serving him during the time of misfortunes.

l. 825. **The court he practised** : A Gallicism.

l. 827. **Chuse** : so spelt to rhyme with *Muse.*

l. 829. Ormond had 8 sons and 2 daughters out of whom he lost 6 sons.

l. 831. **His eldest hope** : Duke of Ormond's eldest son, Thomas, Earl of Ossory.

l. 833. **Snatched in manhood's prime** : Thomas, Earl of Ossory, died in his forty-seventh year.

l. 836. **All parts** : all intelligent sense organs.

l. 842. **Tyrians** : The Dutch. Earl of Ossory fought against the Dutch twice.

l. 843. **Haughty Pharaoh** : King Louis XIV. Thomas, Earl of Ossory served under the Prince of Orange against the French in 1678.

l. 854. **Here stop, my Muse** : another epic device.

l. 855. **Pinions** : wings.

l. 859. **Hearse** : coffin.

l. 861. **Another he** : an Elizabethan usage.

l. 864. **Zadoc** : William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury.

l. 865. **Lowly mind** : William Sancroft was a very modest person.

l. 866. **Sagan of Jerusalem** : Henry Compton, Bishop of Oxford in 1674 and afterwards Bishop of London.

l. 867. **Stem** : family.

l. 868. **Him of the Western Dome** : John Dolben, successively Canon of Christ Church, Archdeacon of London, Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester. The Western Dome is the Westminster Abbey.

l. 869. **Heavenly eloquence** : John Dolben was an eloquent preacher.

l. 870. **The Prophet's sons** : The Westminster boys who were inspired by Dolben's precepts.

l. 874. **Pillars of the laws** : the statesmen.

l. 877. **Sharp-judging Adriel** : John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, patron of Dryden.

ll. 880-881. "When in 1679 Monmouth displeased the King by refusing to quit England he was deprived of his offices and honours, and among them of the Lord-Lieutenancy of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and the Governorship of Hull, which were conferred on Mulgrave.

l. 882. **Jotham** : George Savile, was created by Charles II successively Viscount, Earl, and Marquis of Halifax.

l. 888. **Hushai** : Lawrence Hyde, second son of the Lord Chancellor Clarendon. Macaulay observes, "He was a consistent, dogged, and rancorous party man, Cavalier of the old school, a zealous champion of the Crown and of the Church".

l. 889. **Amiel**: Edward Seymour, Speaker of the House of Commons from 1673 to 1679. To quote Macaulay again, "He was one of the most skilful debaters and men of business in the kingdom," and had "studied all the rules and usages of the House, and thoroughly understood its public temper".

l. 910. **The unequal ruler of the day**: Phaeton, Phoebus's son and charioteer.

l. 913. **Sabbath of his toils**: period of retirement.

l. 920. **To plume the regal rights**: "The regal rights are to be plucked like a bird's feathers" (Christie).

l. 926. **Lenitives**: remedies.

ll. 939-1025. Dr. Johnson comments, "The poem ends with a speech from King David, only in part reproducing the speech of Charles II to the Oxford Parliament (March 1681), of which the King is said to have suggested the insertion". However, W. D. Christie cautions us, "The Oxford speech is the speech made by Charles at the opening of the Parliament at Oxford, March 21, 1681. There are some points of resemblance in the two speeches, but David's speech is certainly far from being a paraphrase of King Charles's".

l, 94. **Assuage**: appease.

l. 955. **Young Samson**: Monmouth.

l. 965. **Gulled**: cheat,

l. 966. **Supplant**: rip up the heels.

l. 966. **The politician's tool**: Monmouth was the instrument of Shaftesbury.

l. 971. **His old instrument**: Shaftesbury.

l. 982. See Genesis, xxvii. 22, "Though they pretend to petition me humbly and deferentially, they are practically employing force." (Collins).

l. 987. "There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, it is enough : the grave ; and the barren womb ; the earth that is not filled with water ; and the fire that saith not, It is enough". *Proverbs* xxx. 15, 16.

ll. 1006-1009. These lines are paraphrased by C. H. Firth thus : "They *i.e.*, the factious party, demand law and shall have law. They are not content with my clemency, with grace or mercy—which is as it were the hinder parts of law and may be seen with safety—but rashly demand to see the very face of law". *Cf. Exodus*, xxxiii, 20-23.

ll. 1026-1027. An illustration of pseudo-classicism, "The peal of thunder was with the Greek and Roman epic poets the symbol that prayer was heard and granted".

APPENDIX

DRYDEN ON SATIRE

(a) Origin of Satire

...But considering satire as a species of poetry, here the war begins amongst the critics. Scaliger the father will have it descend from Greece to Rome, and derives the word *satire*, from *satyrus*, that mixed kind of animal or, as the Ancients thought him, moral god, made up betwixt a man and a goat, with a human head, hooked nose, pointing lips, a bunch or struma under the chin, pricked ears, and upright horns, the body shagged with hair, especially from the waist, and ending in a goat, with the legs and feet of that creature. But Casaubon and his followers, with reason condemn this derivation : and prove that from *satyrus* the word *satire*, as it signifies a poem, cannot possibly descend. For *satira* is not properly a substantive, but an adjective, to which the word *lanx*, in English a charger, or larger, platter, is understood, so that the Greek poem, made according to the manners of a satyr, and expressing his qualities, must properly be called satyrical, and not satire. And thus far 'tis allowed that the Grecians had such poems : but that they were wholly different *in specie* from that to which the Romans gave the name of satire.

From *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693).

(b) Spelling of the word 'Satire' :

In the criticism of spelling, it ought to be with *i* and not with *y*, to distinguish its true derivation from *satura*, not from *satyrus*. And if this be so, then 'tis false spelled

throughout this book, for here 'tis written satyr: which having not considered at the first, I thought it not worth correcting afterwards. But the French are more nice, and never spell it any other ways than *satire.*

From *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693)

(c) Definition of 'Satire':

Heinsius, in his dissertation on Horace, makes it for me in these words: 'Satire is a kind of poetry, without a series of action, invented for the purging of our minds; in which human vices, ignorance and errors, and all things besides, which are produced from them in every man, are severely reprehended, partly dramatically, partly simply, and sometimes in both kinds of speaking, but for the most part figuratively, and occultly; consisting in a low familiar way, chiefly in a sharp and pungent manner of speech; but partly also, in a facetious and civil way of jesting; by which either hatred, or laughter, or indignation, is moved.'—Where I cannot but observe that this obscure but perplexed definition, or rather description, of satire, is wholly accommodated to the Horatian way; and excluding the works of Juvenal and Persius, as foreign from that kind of poem. The clause in the beginning of it (*without a series of action*) distinguishes satire properly from stage-plays, which are all one action, and one continued series of action. The end or scope of satire is to purge the passions; so far it is common to the satires of Juvenal and Persius. The rest which follows is also generally belonging to all three, till he comes upon us, with the excluding clause (*consisting in a low familiar way of speech*), which is the proper character of Horace; and from which the other two, for their honour be it spoken, are far distant.

From *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693).

(b) Satire as 'fine raillery' :

...the nicest and most delicate touches of satire consist in fine raillery...'Tis not reading, 'tis not imitation of an author, which can produce this fineness : it must be inborn ; it must proceed from a genius, and particular way of thinking, which is not to be taught; and therefore not to be imitated by him who has it not from nature. How easy is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those approbrious terms! To spare the grossness of the names, and to do the thing yet more severely, is to draw a full face, and to make the nose and cheeks stand out, and yet not to employ any depth of shadowing. This is the mystery of that noble trade, which yet no master can teach to his apprentice: he may give the rules, but the scholar is never the nearer in his practice. Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not. The occasion of an offence may possibly be given, but he cannot take it. If it be granted that in effect this way does more mischief; that a man is secretly wounded, and though he be not sensible himself, yet the malicious world will find it for him : yet there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place. A man may be capable, as Jack Ketch's[1] wife said of his servant, to a plain piece of work, a bare hanging ; but to make a malefactor die sweetly was only belonging to her husband. I wish I could apply it to myself, if the reader would be kind enough to think it belongs to me. The character of Zimri in my *Absalom* is, in my opinion, worth the whole poem : 'tis not bloody, but 'tis ridiculous enough. And he for whom it was intended was too witty to resent it as an injury. If I had railed, I might have suffered for it justly : but I managed my

1. John Ketch, the public hangman employed by Charles II and James II.

own work more happily, perhaps more dexterously. I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blindsides, and little extravagancies; to which, the wittier a man is, he is generally the more obnoxious. It succeeded as I wished; the just went round, and he was laughed at in his turn who began the frolic.

From *A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693).

SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS

1. Consider Dryden as a representative of his times.

2. Bring out clearly Dryden's relation to the political, social and literary tendencies of the Restoration Age.

3. "Dryden is distinguished principally by his *poetic* ability." How far do you agree with this view ? Give a reasoned answer.

4. Describe Dryden as a satirist.

5. "*Absalom and Achitophel* forms an era in the history of English classical satire". Justify.

6. Sir Walter Scott observes that "the time of its appearance was chosen with as much art as the poem displays genius". Bring out the political background of the poem.

7. It is said that Dryden cast his satire in the epic mould. How far do you subscribe to this view ? Illustrate your answer.

8. "It is as a satirist and pleader in verse that Dryden is best known, and as both he is in some respects unrivalled." Examine the statement with special reference to *Absalom and Achitophel.*

9. "The poem really consists of a series of satirical portraits, cut and polished like jewels, and flashing malignant light from all their facets". Illustrate Dryden's method of character-drawing.

10. "*Absalom and Achitophel* is one of the great national portrait galleries in English literature." Discuss.

11. Consider *Absalom and Achitophel* as an allegorical satire.

12. "To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments." Discuss.

13. "Dryden goes right to the rooted character of the man, to the weaknesses of his nature." Justify this statement with special reference to *Absalom and Achitophel* and show Dryden's qualities as a satirist.

14. Illustrate from *Absalom and Achitophel* Dryden's handling of the heroic couplet.

15. "In a poem like *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden was able to show that the couplet is as fit a vehicle for the communication of a bottomless contempt as it is for rearing up an edifice of argument, as ready to sing the praises of a Barzillai as it is to scream the detraction of a Zimri or a Shimei." Elucidate.

16. "In his elevation of satire to epic dignity, and in his general treatment of the subject, Dryden defied comparison." Consider this with reference to *Absalom and Achitophel*.

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